E/2017/34/Rev.1-E/ICEF/2017/7/Rev.1

United Nations

Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund

Report on the first and second regular sessions and annual session of 2017

Economic and Social Council
Official Records, 2017
Supplement No. 14

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Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund

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United Nations • New York, 2017

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ISSN 0252-3507

[26 October 2017]

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Part one
First regular session of 2017

Held at United Nations Headquarters from 7 to 8 February 2017

I. Organization of the session

A. Election of officers of the Executive Board

1. The Executive Board elected as President the Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations, Walton Alfonso Webson, and as Vice-Presidents the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations, Abdallah Y. Al-Mouallimi, the Permanent Representative of Burkina Faso to the United Nations, Yemdaogo Eric Tiare, the Deputy Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations, May-Elin Stener, and the Deputy Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations, Irina Velichko.

B. Opening statements by the President of the Executive Board and the Executive Director of UNICEF

2. The President welcomed the Executive Director, the Deputy Executive Directors and the staff of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). He congratulated the new members of the Executive Board and noted the great responsibility that they were undertaking for the world's children.

3. He was familiar with the achievements of UNICEF over the previous seven decades, but also the enormous challenges that it faced in confronting the ever-growing crises for children. He noted that nearly one in four children, or an estimated 535 million worldwide, lived in a country affected by conflict or other disasters, many without access to medical care, education, proper nutrition, secure shelter or protection from violence and that many had been forced to flee their homes.

4. UNICEF had worked for 70 years to ameliorate the lives of such children and continually renewed itself to respond to evolving situations. However, the rights of children, enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, did not change, and UNICEF worked tirelessly to fulfil them for every child, everywhere in the world. Those children were tomorrow's adults, on whom depended the peaceful and sustainable future of the planet.

5. He noted his long-standing commitment to promoting the rights of children with disabilities, whom he called among the most disadvantaged, and the championing by UNICEF of such children. He also noted the obstacles, including the increasing number and duration of emergencies, in which fulfilling the special needs of children with disabilities could be considered secondary to meeting the basic requirements of food, water and shelter. He emphasized, however, that the concept of leaving no one behind must be taken seriously, no matter how dire the situation.

6. He requested that the Executive Board join him over the coming year to bring even more attention to the vital issue of equity so that children growing up with a disability had the same opportunities as other children to thrive, learn and become full, contributing members of society.

7. He stressed that UNICEF was non-political and worked for children everywhere.

8. The Executive Director thanked the President for his powerful words and expressed his conviction that everyone in the room agreed with them strongly. He cited a number of achievements by UNICEF in 2016, including reaching nearly 4 million people in the Syrian Arab Republic with new or improved water and sanitation infrastructure; treating 159,000 Nigerian children and 215,000 Yemeni

children for severe acute malnutrition; helping 100,000 people in Myanmar and 325,000 people in Madagascar to gain access to sanitation and 2.5 million people in Ukraine to regain access to safe water; enabling nearly 22,000 children in Burkina Faso to participate in early-learning school-readiness programmes; vaccinating against cholera more than 800,000 people in Haiti; and enabling 693,000 children in South Sudan to receive child-protection services in the midst of conflict. Those accomplishments were achieved with the help of the Executive Board and through mutual confidence and the ability to address problems together.

9. In the traditional UNICEF spirit of open discussion, he wanted to consider the increasing divisions between people and with countries and regions breaking down along political and ideological lines defined by ethnicity and religion. This was a world that was dangerous for children. He urged UNICEF to try, on a daily basis, to avoid letting its work fall victim to the same divisions, not only out of principle, but also for the sake of delivering for children. UNICEF must remain as non-political as possible. Its mission was to serve every child.

10. He noted some of the dangers, difficulties and denial of rights faced by children in many countries, including targeted attacks on schools and health-care facilities; children made to fight and kill as part of armed groups; children denied their right to health, education, water, food and protection — indeed, a future. UNICEF continued to fight for the rights of those children, negotiating for access across the borders of conflicts, rallying global support and resources, working with the Executive Board members and other partners to expand and sustain services and transforming nightmares into dreams and hope. That hope was driven by the Board members, who had striven to set aside politics and unite around what really mattered: the needs of children. If the Member States of the United Nations could not unite around children, what cause could bring them together?

11. He understood that it was not possible to avoid actions with political consequences of some kind, but UNICEF would always work to avoid actions with a partisan political purpose. Being non-political was an investment in hope for humanity because it would foster the willingness of children to one day shape a more peaceful future.

12. The first reason to avoid politicizing the work of UNICEF was to enable it to work in all areas of the world in order to reach all children. It meant sometimes working with groups with which UNICEF disagreed, that did not support its mandate or that trafficked in violence. UNICEF would lose the vital access that it needed if it politicized its work, abandoned humanitarian principles, linked its work to the political efforts of Governments or the United Nations itself to combat any particular group or ever shifted its focus away from children.

13. The second reason was that, by acting in a non-political way, UNICEF best served one of the broadest, often political, purposes of the United Nations: building peace. There was no better way to build a peaceful future than by serving the children of today, who were tomorrow's leaders and decision makers, who held in their hands the future of peace itself.

14. UNICEF would never stand by or be neutral when children's rights were violated, but it would seek to act in a fair, factual and politically impartial way. Only a determinedly non-political approach would allow UNICEF to achieve all the results possible for all children — results built into the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 — which would be discussed at the session. The Plan represented the contribution of UNICEF to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development over the coming four years and would be the framework for its next quadrennial budget.

15. The Strategic Plan was built around five key goals: every child survives and thrives, every child learns, every child is protected from violence and exploitation, every child lives in a safe and clean environment and every child has an equitable chance in life. The goals were interlinked, including in the cross-cutting areas of equity, gender, disability, climate and urbanization, and were aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. Each area of the Plan was developed in consultation with partner United Nations agencies and other agencies working in the area. Internally, UNICEF would deliver on the Plan through an unrelenting focus on managing resources for results.

16. Being effective required the right staff in the right places and supporting them. Therefore, human resources practices were being reformed and the Field Results Group was continuing to help to align the financial and human resources in the field, including simplified procedures for cash transfers, a scorecard to measure country office performance and training for more than 3,000 staff members on results-based management.

17. UNICEF would continue to expand such innovative tools as mobile health, EduTrac and U-Report and a new birth registration app. He noted that the supply function had achieved its largest savings ever: approximately $520 million.

18. UNICEF would carry out the Strategic Plan with its many partners around the world: Governments, donors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society, the private sector and United Nations agencies. Its campaign efforts would engage millions of people in the cause for children. A focus on children must never divide, but rather unite, because it provided the best pathway to peace. He noted that, at the gathering of Nobel laureates in Bogota from 2 to 5 February, a group that UNICEF joined in 1965 when it was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, many speakers praised the long-awaited peace agreement in Colombia. He was reminded that peace was not found on a piece of paper but was built around the lives of people as they repaired their country and built peace. He wished the Colombian colleagues of UNICEF every success on the road ahead.

19. He concluded by quoting the former Executive Director of UNICEF, Henry Labouisse: "The welfare of today's children is inseparably linked with the peace of tomorrow's world". UNICEF was building peace through everything that it did. He thanked the Executive Board members for lending their hands, hearts and voices to the UNICEF mission of reaching every child, everywhere, across every kind of division. It was the most vital and urgent mission there was.

20. In national statements delivered during the opening of the session, many delegations applauded the progress made in such areas as child mortality, undernourishment, injustice and inequalities, poverty, access to education, school retention and gender parity in primary education, including in the least developed countries. Several delegations commended UNICEF on its third-place ranking in the Aid Transparency Index.

21. Delegations also noted the enormous challenges that remained, including the fact that nearly half of the world's 2 billion children continued to suffer from poverty, including many living in absolute poverty, and that the child mortality rate remained high, especially in rural areas. Other endemic problems were high rates of school dropout, illiteracy and disease and the vulnerability of millions of children to armed conflict and natural disasters. A delegation noted that up to half the world's children living in poverty would live in fragile contexts by 2030 and that rapid demographic changes in many parts of the world would require the scaling-up of essential services for children and young people. A delegation said that the future of millions of children was destroyed by the simple fact of being born in a disadvantaged country or community or because of their sex or circumstances. The

delegation noted its support for the partnership strategies of UNICEF, including the Every Newborn Action Plan, the Every Woman, Every Child campaign and the Gavi, The Vaccine Alliance's three-year partnership to vaccinate children who were difficult to reach.

22. Delegations noted that a key priority for UNICEF in 2017 was the development of the Strategic Plan. Several delegations commented that the Plan was the first that UNICEF had developed since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and noted that the success of UNICEF in helping to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals would depend on the optimum crafting and implementation of the Plan. A delegation said that the mandate of UNICEF to operationalize the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its commitment to pursuing, in particular, Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 16 put the organization at the heart of the 2030 Agenda.

23. Several delegations expressed support for the five Goal Areas proposed for the Strategic Plan, the focus on the most disadvantaged children and the disaggregation of the results framework data by sex, age, disability, wealth status and location. A delegation also called for increased data disaggregation in results reporting to support the monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals. A delegation said that, to realize the ambitious goals, UNICEF needed to more fully articulate the Goal Areas and set clear targets and indicators to ensure the logical link between impacts, measurability and the effectiveness of interventions.

24. Delegations called for a focus on the strengthening of governance for equity and social inclusion; the protection of and access to justice for children; increased attention to undernutrition and malnutrition in the least developed countries; the reduction of maternal and child mortality; access to clean water; sanitation; and education. A delegation urged the right balance between the delivery of life-saving interventions and support for early child development.

25. A delegation called for addressing the imbalance in development opportunities in the least developed countries, the sub-Saharan African countries and other developing countries, the rural-urban divide and the wealth gap by prioritizing poverty eradication for children and intensifying measures to improve children's nutrition, health care, education and protection. A delegation said that the Strategic Plan should clearly define the concepts of donor countries and countries that received assistance and stressed the need to retain the interests of middle-income countries in the Plan, given that such countries were key partners in ensuring sustainable development and should not be viewed as the competitors of other countries that received assistance.

26. Several delegations emphasized the importance of national ownership, while a delegation urged enhanced coordination with programme countries on local initiatives, including policymaking and the updating of legal frameworks.

27. A delegation suggested that the Sustainable Development Goals be mainstreamed at all levels, not just at headquarters, with an emphasis on reaching those furthest behind, including small island developing States. Several delegations said that doing so meant actively putting gender equality and women's empowerment, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, front and centre in workplans and institutional practices and ensuring the participation of persons with disabilities throughout a programme's cycle. Doing so would necessitate the collection of disaggregated data to inform programming discussions.

28. Several delegations commended UNICEF on integrating the priorities of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and such global commitments as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the New Urban Agenda and the Grand Bargain on

humanitarian financing, as well as the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020.

29. Several delegations called for the Strategic Plan to reflect the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (General Assembly resolution 71/243), including greater coordination and results-focused collaboration among agencies and within the United Nations system and the leveraging of multi-stakeholder partnerships, including with Governments, NGOs and the private sector. Delegations also called for bridging the humanitarian-development-peace divide; improving efficiencies, including sharing administrative services and facilities within the United Nations development and humanitarian system; and pursuing innovative approaches in such areas as financing, technology and partnerships.

30. Delegations called for the avoidance of the duplication of efforts by limiting UNICEF work to areas in which it could have the greatest impact. A delegation urged UNICEF senior management to do its utmost to support the efforts to reform the United Nations development system.

31. A delegation noted the importance of joint programming and integrated planning at the country and multi-country levels, in particular in the Pacific, where the needs of boys and girls were acute owing to isolation, a lack of economic opportunity and vulnerability to natural hazards, and a delegation urged the harmonization of the format of the strategic plans of all the funds and programmes, in particular the results framework.

32. A delegation called for prioritizing disaster risk reduction to more accurately reflect the increasing humanitarian workload of UNICEF, including through the integration of humanitarian results throughout the results framework and the enhancement of reporting on humanitarian operations. Doing so would be particularly important, given that donors sought to provide more flexible multi-year funding, as committed to through the Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing. A delegation requested more elaboration on the ways in which UNICEF would strengthen the linkage between development and humanitarian systems. Against the backdrop of growing food insecurity and complex humanitarian emergencies, the delegation called upon UNICEF to broaden its programmes for young children and to forge more robust partnerships with other agencies to help the least developed countries.

33. Several delegations said that children were the primary victims of the increasing number of crisis situations around the world, including armed conflicts, migration crises and natural disasters, and were vulnerable to being trafficked and forced into armed groups and other exploitation. They urged UNICEF to detail its approach to child protection in the Strategic Plan and to increase its efforts in that area. A delegation said that the family unit should be given priority in the Plan as the crucial element for creating safe and supportive conditions for children.

34. Several delegations said that building peace was the best way to protect children and that UNICEF had an important role to play in that process. A delegation was encouraged by the positive evaluation of the UNICEF Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy programme and welcomed the intention of UNICEF to ensure that all its programmes were conflict-sensitive and did not reinforce negative dynamics and root causes of conflict. A delegation noted that sustaining peace required all parties to look beyond crisis management towards prevention and long-term peacebuilding. The humanitarian-development and peacebuilding nexus was a key element of that agenda. Several delegations encouraged closer cooperation between UNICEF and other parts of the United Nations, such as peacekeeping operations and other peacebuilding work, and

encouraged UNICEF to develop more flexible approaches aimed at finding synergies with other United Nations efforts. A group of delegations supported the Children, Not Soldiers campaign and called upon all parties in conflict to respect Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) on children and armed conflict.

35. Several delegations mentioned the work of UNICEF to provide education to children in humanitarian situations, including the Education Cannot Wait initiative. The delegation of France said that education in emergency and crisis situations must be a priority for action so that entire generations were not lost and announced that it would contribute approximately 2 million euros to that initiative in 2017. It also announced that it was organizing an international conference with UNICEF on protecting children from war, to be held on 21 February. The delegation of Sweden emphasized that only with solid, predictable and flexible funding could UNICEF efficiently deliver on the 2030 Agenda and the Strategic Plan and announced its 2017 contribution of approximately $63.2 million to core resources.

36. A delegation noted the possibility of four major famines and continuing crises and human suffering in Somalia, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen and other countries and in the Lake Chad Basin region, and said that the United Nations humanitarian appeal for 2017 stood at a record $23 billion. Resources must be used to best effect and the humanitarian and development agencies must come together behind a single, impartial assessment of need and a response plan and use innovative and cost-effective tools, such as cash transfers and more commercial approaches.

37. A delegation commended the outstanding results recorded by the Private Fundraising and Partnerships division, which enabled UNICEF to carry out its response to humanitarian emergencies and provide aid to the most vulnerable populations.

38. A delegation said that developed countries must honour their official development assistance commitments, make their non-core contributions more flexible and provide more financial, technical and other support to developing countries. A delegation said that approved cost-recovery rates must be respected by partners, Governments and the organizations themselves and called for a holistic discussion on funding and financial flows and use of the structured dialogues on financing.

39. Regarding resource allocation, a delegation noted the importance of taking into account the specificities of the Latin American and Caribbean countries, most of which are classified as middle-income, while another said that those countries continued to face enormous inequalities. A delegation said that low-income countries, especially the least developed countries and those in sub-Saharan Africa, should remain the priority. Several delegations urged the use of the Multidimensional Poverty Index, which better reflected the reality of children and countries' unique vulnerabilities, when allocating resources. A delegation hoped that the examination of the situation of Haiti at the session would clarify the complexities inherent in small island developing States and the further tangible actions that could be taken to help them.

40. Several delegations noted that success in the field relied on a coherent United Nations presence, an empowered Resident Coordinator and country teams with knowledge of all development, humanitarian and peacebuilding programmes in country.

41. A delegation noted that the Board of Auditors had highlighted weaknesses in the areas of budget and grants management, cash transfers and programme and inventory management and expressed concern that UNICEF had not improved the

implementation rate of the Board's recommendations. A delegation said that UNICEF should increase the transparency of its global supply chain and management and administration costs. A delegation also noted that planned evaluation topics had been superseded by humanitarian topics. It encouraged UNICEF to ensure that evaluations received the priority and resources outlined in the evaluation policy.

42. Several delegations concurred with the Executive Director that both UNICEF and the well-being of children should be non-political and non-ideological. A delegation noted that political neutrality had been an important element in the successful implementation of the Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy programme.

43. The Executive Director thanked the Executive Board members for their supportive comments. He was particularly struck by the references to concrete action and the results that flowed from them. He thanked a delegation for suggesting a useful set of priorities for how UNICEF could improve its achievement of such action and noted the progress that UNICEF and the entire United Nations system were making on improving back-office functions and producing more disaggregated data to support equity in every country. He acknowledged the reminder of the importance of building flexibility into the Strategic Plan in order to meet the unique needs of each nation and region. He thanked the delegations for referencing the importance of integrating humanitarian and development action, especially resilient development, and noted that a child educated during a humanitarian crisis would be better able to contribute to the future reconstruction of her country. The delegations' comments had provided a reminder of the purpose of the work of UNICEF: that behind the terrible statistics on the numbers of children caught in humanitarian crises was an individual child caught in the worst possible circumstances and that UNICEF must work hard for that child's sake. He pledged the help of UNICEF to Member States and the Secretary-General in trying to speed up reforms and promised that UNICEF would continue to work to expand its resources, including through broader partnerships, noting that the resources from National Committees and from Governments were, in fact, provided by ordinary citizens. He reiterated that UNICEF colleagues around the world were watching the session and that, every time Member States offered support to UNICEF, they were offering support to its staff, which meant a great deal to them.

C. Adoption of the agenda

44. The Executive Board adopted the agenda, timetable and organization of work for the session (E/ICEF/2017/1).

45. The Secretary of the Executive Board announced that 34 observer delegations, including 1 intergovernmental organization, 10 National Committees for UNICEF and 7 non-governmental organizations, had submitted credentials, in accordance with rule 50.2 of the rules of procedure.

II. Deliberations of the Executive Board

A. Assessment of ways to enhance results-based budgeting and assessment of the resource allocation system

46. Following introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Management, the Comptroller, Division of Financial and Administrative Management, presented the assessment of ways to enhance results-based budgeting,

followed by the Deputy Director, who presented the assessment of the resource allocation system (see UNICEF/2017/EB/4).

47. Several delegations recognized efforts by UNICEF to enhance results-based budgeting and commended UNICEF on its increased transparency.

48. A group of delegations urged further progress on staff capacity and training, more measurable performance and data quality and information on the new budget implementation tool. The group requested information on the controls being applied to the organization's decentralized structure to ensure coherence with strategic results, the use of the new guidance and tangible improvements generated in results-based budgeting. A delegation stated that investing in technology was key to improving planning.

49. A delegation planned to look at how gender equality was mainstreamed throughout the results-based management framework and budgeting practices. The development of the new Strategic Plan would provide an opportunity for UNICEF to build on the lessons learned and best practices in those areas.

50. A group of delegations encouraged UNICEF to continue the dialogue around defining the allocation criteria, while another delegation urged the continuous monitoring of the application of the parameters for allocation, as rapid demographic and socioeconomic shifts continued to occur. A few delegations highlighted the need to improve and increase the use of multidimensional indicators.

51. Several delegations noted with concern the decline in regular resources as a share of total resources. Others highlighted the organization's need for predictable and solid resources in order to deliver on its mission and the 2030 Agenda.

52. Several delegations commended the focusing of regular resources on countries with children in the greatest need, in keeping with the imperative of equity and with the Sustainable Development Goals. One delegation stated that low-income countries, especially the least developed countries and countries in sub-Saharan Africa, should remain the priority in terms of resource allocations. Another delegation commended UNICEF on its work in sub-Saharan Africa, which showed a clear determination to continue to prioritize the region's children.

53. The Deputy Executive Director thanked the delegates for their appreciation of what UNICEF had accomplished to date and noted that results-based management and budgeting was at the core of where UNICEF resources were being directed and what was making it more efficient and effective in its use of resources. She noted the initiation of results-based management training, centred on a new budget formulation tool, which would also lead to more transparency.

B. Updated road map to and outline of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021

54. The Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, made introductory remarks, followed by the Deputy Director, Division of Data, Research and Policy, who presented the road map and outline (see UNICEF/2017/EB/3).

55. Many delegations expressed the importance of aligning the Strategic Plan with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, including its directive that the strategic plans reflect organizations' contributions to the 2030 Agenda, while another delegation urged the prioritization of the eradication of poverty, which is also called for in the review. The delegation appreciated the inclusion of South-South cooperation and capacity-building in the Plan.

56. A group of delegations requested that the first chapter in the strategic plan of each entity in the United Nations Development Group clarify the specific contribution of each organization towards realizing the 2030 Agenda, called for the clear articulation of the division of labour among the funds and programmes and requested the further harmonization of the results frameworks. Several delegations said that the strategic plans of the Development Group entities should incorporate lessons learned from the midterm reviews of their current plans.

57. Several delegations called for more robust disaggregation of data by the categories outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals, including sex and disability, as well as age, location and other relevant variables in the national context. Such disaggregated data should inform programming and respond to the real situations of children. A group of delegations said that the plans also needed to incorporate lessons learned in the areas of results-based management and gender equality mainstreaming.

58. A delegation said that it was important to define the term "disadvantaged" in the Strategic Plan.

59. While it welcomed the importance placed on the participation and mobilization of the international community for the protection of the rights of the child, the delegation urged the inclusion of the criteria and methodology with which UNICEF would expand the participation of local communities.

60. The Chair of the Standing Group of National Committees said that the National Committees supported the five Goal Areas but were concerned about raising enough funds, especially regular resources, to achieve them. Since the National Committees raised nearly half the regular resources of UNICEF and some one quarter of its overall revenue, they urged more investment in fundraising. Expanding the partnerships of the National Committees with the private sector would require a clear division of roles and optimal coordination among public, private, national and international actors.

61. The delegate of the NGO Committee on UNICEF called for addressing poverty as a multidimensional reality, eradicating extreme poverty and ensuring that migrant and refugee children, especially those who were unaccompanied, had support along the entire route, from country of origin through transit to destination.

62. The Executive Director said that, regarding coherence, UNICEF had offered its help to the offices of the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General in the requested mapping of the agencies' work. He said that UNICEF would look for all opportunities to find synergies and any redundancies and would revise the Strategic Plan accordingly before the annual session in June. He noted that, beyond the four agencies, UNICEF would be working to coordinate with its closest partners in the field, including the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Health Organization (WHO). He also confirmed that UNICEF would mainstream the quadrennial comprehensive policy review throughout all three sections of the Plan: the What, the How and the Enablers.

63. The Executive Board adopted decision 2017/3 (see annex I).

C. Oral report on UNICEF follow-up to recommendations and decisions of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS Programme Coordinating Board meetings

64. The Director, Programme Division, made introductory remarks, followed by the Associate Director, Programme Division, and the Chief of the HIV/AIDS Section in UNICEF, who presented the report. A background document (UNICEF/2017/EB/2) was available on the UNICEF Executive Board website.

65. Delegations applauded the progress made in the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS. A group of delegations noted that the report and presentation had highlighted the remaining barriers to effective paediatric HIV treatment, care and support, with only 50 per cent of all children living with HIV worldwide provided with lifesaving medicines. The group lauded the continuous engagement of UNICEF in improving HIV prevention and treatment for children and adolescents globally, including as co-founder of the new Start Free, Stay Free, AIDS Free framework. It noted the relevance of the organization's prioritizing of prevention through, for example, the provision of comprehensive sexuality education and its young people-friendly service delivery. Its work in health systems strengthening and social protection were also of high relevance in the area of HIV.

66. The group of delegations expressed deep concern about the financial crisis that UNAIDS was facing, which was having a significant impact on UNICEF HIV-related interventions. UNICEF had cut staff and programmes over the previous two years, resulting in a dramatic impact in West and Central Africa, where coverage of antiretroviral therapy for children was already low; in Asia and the Pacific, where the reduction of staffing was limiting the ability of the programme to reach at-risk and vulnerable groups; and in Eastern and Central Europe, where UNICEF advocacy work was crucial to addressing stigma and discrimination among vulnerable and key populations. Given the high unmet needs on the ground, it welcomed the development of a UNAIDS emergency plan for West and Central Africa. It looked forward to the new fundraising strategy being developed and was especially interested in learning to what extent underserved regions, including West and Central Africa and Eastern and Central Europe, were being considered. In the light of the intrinsic interest of UNICEF in reaching children and young people at risk of being left behind and more than two decades after the beginning of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, it was time for all UNAIDS co-sponsors, including UNICEF, to look at how best to jointly finance the implementation of the UNAIDS Strategy 2016–2021.

67. A delegation noted that, for the period 2016–2021, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) had prioritized 35 fast-track countries that accounted for nearly 90 per cent of all new HIV infections. This type of prioritization was necessary to reach the 90–90–90 target. The delegation applauded the detailed gap analysis conducted by UNAIDS using UNICEF data and input on paediatric prevention care and treatment, including the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, and it encouraged a sustained emphasis on paediatric HIV treatment and care, the close monitoring of progress and the accuracy of epidemiological estimates. The delegation applauded the leadership of UNICEF as a co-convener of the Inter-Agency Task Team on Prevention and Treatment of HIV Infection in Pregnant Women, Mothers and their Children, which had resulted in a significant decline in new child infections in 2016.

68. A delegation called for the rights aspect of access to prevention and treatment to be further addressed and for UNICEF to advance the comprehensive introduction of point-of-care diagnostic tools for children. Retention in care was noted to be

important and community facility linkages should be strengthened. Experiences from the community component and other lessons gained from regional initiatives to optimize treatment access and retention in care should be shared widely.

69. Several delegations expressed concern about the high level of HIV infections among adolescent girls and young women. A group of delegations called upon UNICEF to maintain its support with regard to reducing new HIV infections among adolescents and young people through such initiatives as All In to #EndAdolescentAIDS.

70. A delegation noted that UNAIDS had achieved incredible results with a modest budget and that its funding was best spent on catalytic activities. Two delegations said that, to maintain programmes in the light of contracting budgets, UNICEF and the other co-sponsors would need to contribute more of their own funding to the HIV/AIDS response. One delegation said that, for an effective response to the epidemic, it was necessary to adequately finance the broader health architecture and it recommended that each co-sponsor include the AIDS response in its agency's resource mobilization.

71. A delegation said that it was vital that all parties understand that each pledged contribution was crucial to the work outlined in the new strategy and that, if the current decline in contributions was not addressed, the international community was likely to miss the opportunity to end the AIDS epidemic and would see death tolls rise. The delegation of Sweden announced that it had increased its annual core contribution to UNAIDS for 2017 to $26 million and invited other Member States to follow its lead.

72. The Associate Director, HIV/AIDS Section, welcomed the growing partnerships around the adolescent goals and thanked the Government of the United States of America for its continued leadership and commitment to the HIV response through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief in 2004, which had contributed more than $70 billion to the global AIDS response. She also thanked Sweden for its continued support. The Executive Director noted that, with the enormous progress made on HIV/AIDS, as with polio, there was a tendency to declare victory and walk away. It was important to combine the rhetoric of recent years with the resources necessary for the coming years.

D. Oral update on UNICEF humanitarian action

73. The Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, made introductory remarks, followed by the Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, who presented the oral update.

74. A group of delegations noted that UNICEF leadership remained critical to ensuring that the rights and protection of all girls and boys were at the head of development action. A delegation noted that an estimated 230 million children globally were living in areas affected by armed conflict and it applauded the essential work of UNICEF to protect the interests of the world's children, especially the most vulnerable, the most disadvantaged and those most in need.

75. A delegation welcomed dialogue on increasing transparency, reducing management costs, advancing support for local and national actors and increasing accountability to affected populations. The delegation also called for the mitigation of fraud, waste and abuse and the identification of ways to share incident reports and other information between agencies. It said that the United Nations, as a collective, needed to work jointly to address such issues. A group of delegations noted that increased transparency should also cover information about the role of

UNICEF within the larger humanitarian system, in particular in the context of the commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit, including on gender equality.

76. The group of delegations reiterated its request made at the previous Executive Board session for periodic updates on the UNICEF strategy for engaging in the humanitarian system, with such information as concrete steps taken to work collaboratively with other agencies at the country level and the ways in which results and efficiency dividends would be measured. The success of UNICEF in humanitarian action depended on cooperation and coordination with others. Therefore, the group encouraged UNICEF to focus not only on country updates or overall humanitarian figures in humanitarian updates to the Executive Board, but also to include information on institutional and policy reforms. It encouraged UNICEF, as a first step, to share with Member States its implementation plan for its Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing commitments, not only to improve transparency and accountability, but also to showcase the unique role of UNICEF in humanitarian action.

77. The group of delegations noted that UNICEF spent approximately 40 per cent of its resources on humanitarian action, making the accountability and transparency of those funds more important than ever. It suggested two ways to improve in this regard: first, to firmly entrench humanitarian action in the Strategic Plan, laying out its strategy for humanitarian action generally and specifically and explaining how it planned to ensure the provision of principled humanitarian assistance; and, second, to provide clear indicators for measuring success, including results relating to World Humanitarian Summit commitments and to UNICEF efforts to link humanitarian and development work. The group noted that UNICEF had already shown that it could make meaningful contributions, for example, in the area of education in emergencies and protracted crises.

78. The group of delegations said that ensuring the integration of humanitarian action throughout the Strategic Plan would also help to build the evidence base for multi-year funding beyond the output level and to demonstrate that longer-term investments could result in greater impact. UNICEF should provide multi-year information for humanitarian appeals that provided estimates for needs beyond a single calendar year. This was especially important in the case of protracted crises. UNICEF should also articulate its approach to undertaking and completing humanitarian evaluations on schedule.

79. A delegation requested that United Nations agencies that addressed humanitarian needs work internally and collectively to fill strategic gaps in the humanitarian system, including through joint needs assessments; holistic and prioritized response strategies according to urgency that were inclusive of all affected populations; improved context-specific operational coordination and information management systems; and mutually accountable leadership structures. A group of delegations urged that greater effort be made towards working jointly with other agencies to prioritize needs and ensure that beneficiaries, at a time when they were most vulnerable, received well-coordinated, coherent assistance. This would be critical to ensuring the most efficient use of limited resources.

80. The Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, said that the work that UNICEF would be doing with front-line workers would contribute to the long-term capacity-building necessary to reduce vulnerabilities. The Deputy Executive Director said that humanitarian results would be entrenched in the Strategic Plan and that gender-based violence would continue to be a targeted priority in the Gender Action Plan. He also noted that UNICEF would share its implementation plan for the Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing in the context of discussions

that the Executive Director was having with the Executive Directors of the War-torn Societies Project and the International Organization for Migration, as well as UNHCR.

E. UNICEF programme cooperation

Country programme documents

Eastern and Southern Africa

81. The Regional Director presented the country programme for Botswana (E/ICEF/2017/P/L.1). The programme had three components: child poverty, adolescents and HIV and programme effectiveness, and was underpinned by child rights, gender equality and community engagement. UNICEF aimed to support the Government of Botswana in developing and implementing inclusive child-sensitive policies and programmes, address bottlenecks and collect, analyse and use data and strategic information more effectively.

82. The representative of Botswana welcomed the country programme and commended UNICEF and the entire United Nations family on their contributions to the development of the country's children. He said that the Government continued to emphasize quality childhood development through universal free education and health care, nutrition in and out of school and general budget support. The country programme was centred on the national priorities of Botswana, as expressed in the eleventh national development plan and Vision 2036, which placed at its core the need to promote and protect children's rights and well-being. The proposed programme had come at a critical time, when Botswana was seeking to gain traction in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

Latin America and Caribbean

83. The Regional Director presented the country programme for Haiti (E/ICEF/2017/P/L.2). She noted the emergency situation occasioned by Hurricane Matthew and the tragic impact of cholera on Haitian families. Those disasters, which required a major humanitarian response, demonstrated the need to enhance risk-management mechanisms and to ensure continued support for the Haitian people in a transformative development programme.

84. The representative of Haiti said that the crises of the past, repeated disasters and the structural handicaps of the economy must be taken into account in explaining the poor development of Haiti and its negative consequences for children. She urged a collective approach to reverse the trend and create the preconditions for the equitable distribution of basic services and a substantial improvement in the life of the population. She welcomed the UNICEF contribution to Haiti, especially its work with the Government and civil society, which had led to the ratification of important conventions for the protection of children and persons with disabilities.

85. Several delegations applauded the country programme, with a delegation calling it robust because it was based on concrete data and the reality of the country situation. Several delegations noted the focus on leaving no one behind, including the most excluded and disadvantaged children and those with disabilities. A delegation emphasized the importance of pursuing gender equity.

86. Delegations recognized that UNICEF worked in Haiti in close collaboration with other United Nations entities, national institutions and other partners, and that the approach had been successful. The programme was in synergy with the

Sustainable Development Goals and committed to cooperation with other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

87. A delegation said that the programme would help to further strengthen the institutions in Haiti, establishing the conditions necessary to ensure the development of all Haitian children and adolescents and promote their rights, their inclusion in society and their full development.

88. The Executive Board adopted decision 2017/1 (see annex I).

F. Evaluation report and management response

Evaluation of the UNICEF Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy programme and management response

89. The report was presented by the Director, Evaluation Division. The management response was then presented by the Director, Programme Division. The programme and the evaluation had been funded by the Government of the Netherlands.

90. Several delegations said that the evaluation had come at a pivotal moment, when violent conflict and insecurity were creating a lost generation of children and young people. The programme was a pioneering effort to break down the silos between traditional development, humanitarian and security approaches. It had shown that education could address the root causes of conflict and contribute to sustainable peace. It was an example for other programmes in the fields of education and peacebuilding and for the broader development community.

91. A delegation cited the importance of political neutrality in the successful implementation of the programme. While supporting the idea that development contributed to conflict prevention, another delegation said that it was beyond the range and mandate of the United Nations country teams, and UNICEF in particular, to solve political causes of conflict, such as transfers of weapons or foreign fighters, or foreign occupation, which were the responsibility of the Security Council.

92. A delegation welcomed the intention of UNICEF to ensure that its programmes were conflict-sensitive and avoided reinforcing negative dynamics or the root causes of conflict. Some delegations encouraged closer cooperation with other United Nations entities, in line with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review. A group of delegations noted the recommendation for UNICEF to look beyond sector-based partnerships and encouraged the inclusion of community-based organizations.

93. A group of delegations recommended that UNICEF incorporate a gender dimension into its conflict analysis and ensure that the findings were mainstreamed into country programmes and the Strategic Plan. Several delegations said that it was important to further mainstream conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding throughout the UNICEF country programme cycle, while one urged a greater understanding of what that would entail, given different country contexts. The group of delegations cautioned that mainstreaming did not always lead to peacebuilding and that the findings should be translated into planning and conflict-sensitive programmes.

94. A delegation encouraged UNICEF to provide a clear vision for its contribution to peacebuilding in the Strategic Plan and to secure the appropriate financial resources. Another delegation said that fundraising should be considered in a holistic manner, with the country programme as its base.

95. The Executive Director thanked the Netherlands for its support for the Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy programme. He concurred with the

Director, Programme Division, that conflict analysis would be looked at in the context of broader risk-informed programming. UNICEF was already working closely with other entities of the United Nations, for example, by coordinating conflict analysis with the Department of Political Affairs. In its planning and strategy development, UNICEF was working with other agencies, such as the International Labour Organization and UNDP.

G. UNICEF financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2015 and report of the Board of Auditors

96. The Executive Board had before it the UNICEF financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2015 and report of the Board of Auditors (A/71/5/Add.3), the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/71/669) and the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors contained in its reports on the United Nations funds and programmes for the year ended 31 December 2015 (A/71/331/Add.1 (Part I)).

97. Following introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Management, the report was presented by the Comptroller, who summarized the financial report and statements and highlighted the fact that the Board of Auditors had rendered UNICEF an unqualified audit opinion.

98. Delegations supported the recommendation to consolidate an annual integrated budget at the corporate level. The roll-out of a new budget formulation tool in 2017 was anticipated by several delegations. Delegations also supported the recommendation that UNICEF clearly define operational costs to be met by the programme budget.

99. The creation of office scorecards to monitor the timeliness of donor reporting was encouraging. UNICEF was urged to prioritize donor report completion rates and quality, improve monitoring and evaluation plans and increase completion rates by regional and country offices of annual work plans and management plans.

100. Given their impact on programme delivery and value for money, a group of delegations urged UNICEF to address the recommendations on supply chain and inventory management. The group expressed its appreciation for the implementation by UNICEF of the guidelines for the harmonized approach to cash transfers but urged action on the assessments to be carried out by country offices for implementing partners. The group cited the report's finding of progress made in preparing risk registers at the country level but urged UNICEF to address the quality and consistency of the registers, ensure better documentation and more frequent reviews and prioritize efforts to address the other risk areas cited in the report.

101. The Comptroller noted the efforts of UNICEF to close the recommendations. He also acknowledged the risk attached to cash assistance and noted an inter-agency effort within the United Nations system regarding cash-based assistance programmes. Regarding risk management, he said that the goal was to ensure the management of risk to objectives and to the achievement of results and noted the improvement in UNICEF management of financial risk in terms of currencies and volatility.

102. The Executive Board adopted decision 2017/4 (see annex I).

H. Private Fundraising and Partnerships: 2017 workplan and proposed budget

103. After an introduction by the Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, the Director, Division of Private Fundraising and Partnerships, presented the 2017 workplan and proposed budget (E/ICEF/2017/AB/L.1).

104. A group of delegations noted the 3 per cent overall increase in the 2017 budget compared with 2016 and that the estimated income for 2017 included a 6 per cent increase in regular resources and a 1 per cent increase in other resources. The group regarded that moderate growth favourably, in view of the economic challenges and uncertainties with respect to currency losses.

105. The group applauded UNICEF for its efforts to achieve greater transparency, making it easier to understand the complex activities of the Division.

106. The group noted that effectiveness was a precondition for measuring progress. It requested to see, in addition to financial targets, targets for private sector engagement, advocacy of child rights, external communication and brand positioning and the management of the strategic relationship between UNICEF and the National Committees. Doing so would also enable reporting in more detail on results in the Private Fundraising and Partnerships annual report.

107. The group noted a $10 million increase in investment funds to be used for strategic revenue-generating activities and said that it assumed that those funds were to serve as initial funding and not for the constant support of a fundraising channel.

108. The group requested clarification on the derivation of the $43 million in other resources budgeted for field offices on the cost side. In addition, there was no additional information on the markets that the Division focused on and what proportion of investment flowed into those markets. The group also noted the lack of information on the allocation of the investment funds to specific markets with a National Committee or field office presence, and therefore no associated aims. It requested clarification on that and on the proposed 11 per cent increase in the number of fundraising posts in field offices.

109. A group of delegations noted the need to clarify the difference between the role of Private Fundraising and Partnerships and that of the National Committees and field offices in raising revenue from Governments, companies and private donors.

110. The Chair of the Standing Group of National Committees noted that National Committees had contributed a record $1.238 billion to UNICEF in 2016, representing approximately 86 per cent of the total private sector revenue and exceeding the previous year's approved budget.

111. The Standing Group supported the efforts of the Division to reduce its operating costs, which mirrored those of the National Committees. He noted that, while the National Committees strove to reach a 75 per cent contribution rate, the rate had reached an all-time high of 77 per cent in 2015.

112. The Chair of the Standing Group emphasized the crucial role played by investment funds in helping to reach UNICEF goals for children and noted the demonstrated ability of the National Committees for strong returns on investment. The investment in 2014 by Private Fundraising and Partnerships in the National Committee of the Republic of Korea for the digital acquisition of pledge donors was expected to return at least $8 for every $1 invested. The investment in 2016 of less than $500,000 in short message services and telephone strategies in Spain was

expected to attract 6,000 new donors and return $1.5 million, a more than three-to-one return over three years.

113. The Chair of the Standing Group also noted that the "one UNICEF" response in Europe was a joint effort that built on the National Committee advocacy work that was already strong there, along with excellent programme delivery by UNICEF.

114. A delegation said that there seemed to be no budgeted post for Africa. The Director responded that there was a dedicated team based in Nairobi covering the entire Africa region, but that one post would be added in Africa as part of the 2017 budget. He also said that adding more resources to Africa was being contemplated for the future. Africa was considered one of the promising areas in the world in terms of working in new countries and would be key to the development of partnerships with the private sector.

115. Regarding posts in general, the Director said that 22 of the 25 new posts were being created in Latin America, mostly in the Brazil and Mexico country offices, because of the potential in those two countries to gain pledge donors. In addition, the potential for acquiring pledge donors around the world was enormous. While UNICEF was projected to have 5 million pledge donors by the end of 2017, it was clear that that number could be multiplied by a factor of two or three in the coming years.

116. Regarding investing in country offices, the Director responded that approximately 72 per cent of investment was directed to National Committee countries and 28 per cent to country offices. In a number of country offices, fundraising was beginning from a low base, unlike in National Committee countries. An example was Argentina, where UNICEF currently had 220,000 pledge donors, more than in many European countries. The investment from day one in dedicated teams with the right skills and the right fundraising techniques applied consistently over several years resulted in not only the high level of pledge donors, but also the driving of regular resources from the country. The same was true for Malaysia, Thailand and Uruguay and would be soon in Brazil and Mexico. The overall expense-to-revenue ratio had declined in the previous three years from 6.2 per cent to 4.4 per cent. In country offices specifically, the ratio remained at 18 per cent, with the new posts created in those countries relating directly to the revenue generation expected from them.

117. The Executive Board adopted decision 2017/2 (see annex 1).

I. Other matters

Provisional list of agenda items for the annual session of 2017

118. The provisional list of agenda items for the annual session of 2017 was presented by the Secretary of the Executive Board.

J. Adoption of draft decisions

119. The Executive Board adopted decisions 2017/1 through 2017/4 (see annex).

K. Closing statements by the Executive Director of UNICEF and the President of the Executive Board

120. The Executive Director noted that the session had been very efficient, which was encouraging because there was a lot of work ahead dealing with a challenging

world, embracing change and opportunity in the United Nations, collaborating with partners in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and acting on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and completing the Strategic Plan and the integrated budget. UNICEF would be working on a coherent approach with the other United Nations agencies, an initiative of concern to both the Board and UNICEF partners in the field, such as WFP, UNHCR and WHO.

121. The Executive Director said that, in 2017, it was tremendously important that UNICEF achieve results, primarily for the children, but also because, at a time of scepticism about the United Nations, it was also doing so for the sake of the United Nations as a whole.

122. He appreciated the statements of support for UNICEF and noted that staff members were listening in to the Board meeting. Many of them were out there, often in lonely offices and sometimes in very difficult situations, and for them to see that New York and the Board were remembering them was tremendously important.

123. The President conveyed the Board's appreciation to the participants for their presentations. He said that the comprehensive updates received from the secretariat clearly indicated that UNICEF was building on its strengths and comparative advantages, while refining its strategies and approaches in order to achieve strong results for children.

124. The Board's priorities for the year included making sure that the Strategic Plan followed the timetable, as outlined in the road map, so that it could be presented for approval by the Board in September and UNICEF could begin its work in the new year in accordance with an approved plan and budget. The Board would guide UNICEF so that the Plan fully incorporated the 2030 Agenda, other intergovernmentally agreed outcomes, including the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, and the lessons learned from the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2014–2017.

125. The President thanked the Vice-Presidents of the Bureau for their collegiality and support. He acknowledged the work of the facilitators who had led the negotiations on the draft decisions and warmly thanked the Executive Director, the senior management team, the Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board and all those who had contributed to the session's successful outcome. On a personal note, the President, who is blind, commended UNICEF on making the session the most accessible of any meeting in which he had ever participated. He felt that, through the meeting, the organization was setting best practice for the United Nations and others.

Part two
Annual session of 2017

Held at United Nations Headquarters from
13 to 15 June 2017

I. Organization of the session

A. Opening statements by the President of the Executive Board and the Executive Director of UNICEF

126. In his opening statement, the President recognized the commitment of Anthony Lake, UNICEF Executive Director, the Deputy Executive Directors and all UNICEF staff working for the rights of children.

127. He drew attention to the organization's many successes while pointing to the challenges ahead. He highlighted the situation of children around the world, from malnourished children in Somalia and Yemen to children in refugee camps in Jordan and on European migration routes. He pointed to children with disabilities and children of school age in conflict areas. He spoke of the horrific deaths of children in the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

128. He stressed that UNICEF played a vital role in helping those and all children. The organization recognized that its effectiveness was tied to its ability to evolve and innovate, one of its major strengths. In that regard, the annual session was especially important because UNICEF was not only reflecting on successes and lessons but also looking forward to determining how it could continue to be the world's premier organization for the defence of children's rights, especially the most disadvantaged and vulnerable.

129. The UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, would guide the organization for the next four years, following its expected adoption at the second regular session 2017. In accordance with the 2017–2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR), the UNICEF Strategic Plan was harmonized with the strategic plans of other United Nations development-system organizations.

130. The President underscored that the joint field visit of the Executive Boards to Nepal showed the impressive results of collaborative efforts with United Nations partners in post-conflict rehabilitation, social cohesion, gender-based violence, and recovery and resilience-building from the terrible earthquake of 2015. Similarly, the field visits of the Executive Board to Lesotho and South Africa showed the impact of UNICEF-supported schools and career-development programmes for girls.

131. He highlighted UNICEF work towards greater inclusiveness. He noted in particular new initiatives in programming, including collaboration between the UNICEF Supply Division and the Disability Section to develop a guide for assistive-technology products for children. Access to such products determined whether a child would be educated or relegated to the margins of society. UNICEF also worked with the World Health Organization (WHO) to ensure that the WHO list of 50 priority assistive devices included those most relevant to children, and to guarantee that children with disabilities could obtain them.

132. The President concluded with a proposal to extend the term of leadership of the Executive Boards for more than one year, emphasizing that doing so would enhance the ability of the Executive Boards to fulfil their fiduciary responsibilities and better serve the organizations. It would also allow officers to continue to provide technical and policy support to the Executive Boards.

133. In his address, the Executive Director focused on the topic of equity in relation to children's rights. He stressed that failure to reach children because of where they live or because of their religion, ethnicity, gender or disability was a fundamental violation of their rights.

134. He explained that while the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals had been achieving real progress in reducing overall under-five mortality rates, it often failed to do so for the poorest and most disadvantaged. The "tyranny of averages" was obscuring the struggles of children who were the hardest to reach and therefore the hardest to serve. As a result, in 2010, the Executive Board expressed its firm, collective resolve to make the bottom quintile the organization's top priority.

135. In that year, UNICEF conducted the first modelling study on narrowing the gaps to debunk the assumption that helping those most in need was praiseworthy but too expensive and too difficult. The study showed that the greater cost of reaching the most deprived children and families was significantly outweighed by the greater results. Working towards equity was not only right in principle but also right in practice — and cost-effective.

136. UNICEF placed the most disadvantaged at the heart of its work in all country programmes, supporting an emerging global trend. A new study in 2017 described practical steps to reduce inequities — among them strengthening community-based approaches to health, using disaggregated data to identify children left behind, and investing in proven health interventions to prevent unnecessary illness and death among the most disadvantaged. The focus on reducing inequities provided the fastest path for governments to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to meet their commitment to "leave no one behind".

137. The Executive Director assured the Executive Board that UNICEF would continue supporting governments through its Strategic Plan, 2018-2021. The accompanying budget included increased investments in country programmes supported by new investments in fundraising for regular resources. All goal areas were interlinked through cross-cutting priorities in equity, gender equality, humanitarian action, children with disabilities and adolescent development. The results framework included common indicators for agencies to measure their collective progress. In addition, UNICEF proposed other common approaches, including resource mobilization for joint initiatives, new monitoring and evaluation frameworks to track performance, strengthened results groups, and expanding the standard operating procedures.

138. UNICEF was also pursuing greater operational and programmatic efficiency. Building on recent innovations, the Field Results Group was working to better align UNICEF financial and human resources in the field. The evaluation function was helping to design, target and deliver interventions that make the biggest difference in children's lives. And UNICEF was strengthening its audit function by reinforcing new initiatives, such as reforming staff performance management and recruitment, and adopting an anti-fraud strategy.

139. UNICEF remained focused on innovation, vital to its equity agenda, through, for example, RapidPro, a messaging system using social media, helping UNICEF-supported programmes in over 40 country offices, or Magic Box, a data-analysis platform designed to support disaster-management efforts, including the ability to predict where diseases were travelling.

140. He stressed that, in its efforts to reach the most disadvantaged, UNICEF had to broaden its base of supporters around the world, including by developing new advocacy and fundraising campaigns with its National Committees for UNICEF, country offices and regional teams.

141. The Executive Director noted in closing that the UNICEF global staff survey showed strong ratings in performance management, diversity, staff security and knowledge and information-sharing. Work-life balance, workload distribution and

standards of conduct had improved, while career development remained a challenge. One area where staff satisfaction had remained extremely high was motivation.

B. Adoption of the agenda

142. The Executive Board adopted the provisional annotated agenda, timetable and organization of work for the session (E/ICEF/2017/6).

143. In accordance with rule 50.2 of the rules of procedure, the Secretary of the Executive Board announced that credentials had been submitted by 22 observer delegations, including two international organizations, two non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and seven UNICEF National Committees.

II. Deliberations of the Executive Board

A. Annual report for 2016 of the Executive Director of UNICEF

Oral update on UNICEF humanitarian action

UNICEF report on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit

144. The President introduced the annual report for 2016 of the Executive Director (E/ICEF/2017/6), accompanied by the report on the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and the Integrated Results and Resources Framework of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 (E/ICEF/2017/6/Add.2 and annex); the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, draft for review (E/ICEF/2017/12); the draft results framework of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 (E/ICEF/2017/EB/9); and the annual report on the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2014–2017 (E/ICEF/2017/9 and annex). The Executive Board also had before it the report on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit, summarizing the UNICEF response to recommendations relevant to the organization (E/ICEF/2017/8).

145. After introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, the Director of the Division of Data, Research and Policy presented the annual report for 2016 of the Executive Director, which was followed by an oral update on UNICEF humanitarian action by the Director, Emergency Programmes.

146. Executive Board members welcomed the annual report and the progress made against the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014–2017, particularly in the staunch championing of the rights of the child. They commended the exemplary leadership of the Executive Director and the work of UNICEF staff globally, especially in humanitarian settings. They praised with the organization's achievements in 2016, particularly results in education, health, water, malnutrition and protection of children. They welcomed the 2017 Narrowing the Gaps report, which they hoped would encourage greater investments in equity approaches to development.

147. Delegations encouraged UNICEF to step up its efforts in health, including through actions to strengthen social protection systems, especially for children and adolescents in vulnerable settings. They commended UNICEF for its invaluable contribution to global efforts to eradicate polio and to the multisectoral approach to the Zika outbreak — excellent illustrations of how UNICEF improved its working methods with other major multilateral organizations.

148. Executive Board members also pointed to challenges, such as the high number of primary school-aged children out of school, stunting among children under 5, sexual violence against girls and pervasive violations of children's rights. They

expressed concern with inequities plaguing children in certain regions, especially in least developed countries. They called on UNICEF to help countries to capitalize on the demographic dividend. Some delegations were concerned with the slow progress on HIV/AIDS and limited financial resources devoted to it, but commended UNICEF for establishing new partnerships through the Global Vision and Strategic Direction.

149. UNICEF was encouraged to present strategies for working in and responding to contexts of crisis and fragility. Delegations noted that UNICEF played a key role in strengthening both principled humanitarian responses and longer-term development commitments and expressed appreciation for strengthened delivery on Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action. Regarding education, they applauded UNICEF efforts as Grant Agent for the Global Partnership for Education. They recognized the Education Cannot Wait Fund as an example of UNICEF innovative work in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to reach crisis-affected children and youth with safe, free, quality education by 2030. They encouraged UNICEF to share its best practices in that area with other United Nations organizations.

150. On effectiveness and efficiency, delegations were pleased to see costs related to management, administration and development effectiveness drop to one of the lowest among United Nations organizations. They welcomed improvements in results-based budgeting and strengthening of internal mechanisms, which had led to greater coherence among United Nations system country programmes.

151. Delegations applauded the organization's continued focus on private-sector engagement and innovation to improve efficiency, including in procurement and market-shaping practices. They were pleased with the Innovation Fund, which enabled UNICEF to target investments in portfolios of emerging technologies developed in programme countries and to extend its engagement with corporate partners.

152. They commended UNICEF efforts to promote access to good-quality, disaggregated, updated data, and to build data-management capacities at the country level to support decision-making. They called on UNICEF to step up collaboration with national statistics offices.

153. Delegations expressed strong support for evaluation, audit and internal control functions, and commended UNICEF for being recognized as one of the most transparent aid organizations in 2016. They appreciated the inclusion of scorecards, seeking their further elaboration, and encouraged UNICEF to make its contributions to common inter-agency goals more visible. They urged UNICEF to continue to ensure an independent evaluation function and sufficient resources for the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations. They requested that practical, measurable solutions for reporting to the Executive Board be reflected in the draft strategic plan and results framework.

154. Delegations said that consultation on the draft Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, had been transparent and constructive. The plan should be focused on results and human rights-based and set the strategic and policy directions in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the QCPR and the Secretary-General's reform agenda.

155. Delegations supported the plan's five strategic goals and two cross-cutting areas of gender and humanitarian work. They sought details on operational structure and staffing policy adjustments that would further integrate humanitarian assistance and development programmes.

156. UNICEF, it was noted, should focus on strengthening national public-service systems, and advocacy work to help governments assume their responsibilities towards children, particularly the most disadvantaged children. UNICEF should partner with civil society and the public on advocacy for realizing the rights of children, and with the private sector on applying codes of conduct for the proper treatment of children. The private sector, they stressed, had a key role to play in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Delegations encouraged UNICEF to develop a clear strategy for working with the private sector strategy that reflected the QCPR directive to strengthen national capacities to leverage resources for implementation of the Goals.

157. Delegations requested UNICEF to continue to play a central role in United Nations system coordination — focused on leadership, efficiency, accountability and performance at all levels, especially through the resident coordinator system and the United Nations Development Group. They welcomed ongoing UNICEF work to identify and strengthen inter-agency collaboration in supporting Member States.

158. Delegations welcomed the common chapter in the agencies' strategic plans and their collaborative arrangements. They expected each agency to undertake concrete, ambitious and measurable commitments, followed up with reporting based on joint results and indicators. The shift to a collaborative approach should appear in the draft strategy, and should include joint procurement services. They also emphasized joint assessments, planning and data generation.

159. They said UNICEF had an important role to play in strengthening system-wide coherence for the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Delegations expected UNICEF to work closely with United Nations system to deliver on the pledge to provide collective outcomes and embrace new ways of working across institutional boundaries, based on comparative advantages, in accordance with agreements made at the World Humanitarian Summit.

160. Stable, adequate, predictable core resources were critical for UNICEF to support implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Delegations called upon the international community to be more proactive in supporting this effort of UNICEF. They urged countries to abide by their funding commitments and, where possible, increase contributions to core resources. Delegations requested UNICEF to continue to pursue transparency and provide the Executive Board with detailed, updated information on regular-resource use and cost recovery.

161. Funding constraints called for UNICEF to adopt innovative approaches to financing, including innovative partnerships with the private sector and others. UNICEF had to attract more flexible, predictable multi-year funding to ensure it was fit-for-purpose for 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development implementation. Delegations welcomed the increase private-sector funding in the last several years.

162. A group of countries encouraged UNICEF to continue to tailor its services to countries' specific needs, be they middle-income, landlocked, least developed or small island developing countries. They called upon UNICEF and the United Nations system to maintain a universal, holistic, interrelated approach to development to help to ensure that "no one is left behind". They recognized UNICEF success in helping countries transition from middle-income to high-income status, while noting that significant numbers of children in those countries were still affected by many development gaps. UNICEF should continue to promote innovative strategies to narrow the gaps, tailored to national contexts.

163. A number of delegations expressed concern with the ongoing reduction in the allocation of UNICEF core resources and activities in middle-income countries

(MICs). They stressed that MICs still face significant poverty and inequality challenges and needed UNICEF support to avoid setbacks in progress.

164. On gender, delegations expressed their satisfaction with the annual report on the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2014–2017. They encouraged UNICEF to ensure that gender equality was a cross-cutting priority in the draft strategic plan. Some delegations requested that UNICEF set concrete targets for gender. One encouraged UNICEF to strengthen its capacity to undertake sound gender-based analysis and address gender-mainstreaming shortcomings. They sought concrete examples of UNICEF collaborative work on gender with other United Nations organizations.

165. The representative of the Standing Group of National Committees stressed that private sector contributions were the largest single source of regular resources, accounting for 30 per cent of total revenue in 2016. She underscored that the National Committees had almost 8 million donors globally and transparent reporting encouraged them to contribute more. She appealed to delegations to work with their citizens to increase funding to UNICEF.

166. The representative of the NGO Committee on UNICEF highlighted the need for a multidimensional approach to child poverty, the efficient collection and dissemination of comprehensive, disaggregated data, optimal growth and development in the first two years of life, protecting children from all forms of violence through an integrated approach, and prioritizing migrant and refugee children. The committee sought the meaningful participation of all girls, boys and young people, including those from marginalized and excluded populations, at all levels of decision-making.

167. The Executive Board adopted decision 2017/7 (see annex I).

B. UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, draft for review

168. The Acting President introduced the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, draft for review (E/ICEF/2017/12) and the draft results framework of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 (E/ICEF/EB/9).

169. After introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, the Deputy Director of the Division of Data, Research and Policy presented the reports.

170. Delegations welcomed the draft Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, expressing appreciation for the inclusive consultative process UNICEF had followed with Member States in developing the draft. They commended the draft plan for reflecting progress made and lessons learned from the previous Strategic Plan, 2014–2017. They welcomed the five goal areas, the more innovative implementation strategies in collaboration with other United Nations organizations, civil society and the private sector, and the risk management and evaluation framework.

171. Delegations stressed that the plan should be consistent with the QCPR. It should respect national sovereignty and respond to the priorities and capacities of countries and to national plans, ensuring differentiated approaches tailored to country needs.

172. Further, it should prioritize the organization's role in helping countries leverage the demographic dividend. Capacity-building of national statistics services was key so that gender and age disaggregated data could improve analysis for more effective action on the ground. In mainstreaming gender, it was necessary to include

boys and men, whose contribution to gender equality was essential. Demographic-dividend work should also include early childhood development, focused on preschools, to strengthen the chain of education.

173. One delegation stressed that the plan should focus not only on governance but also on social protection, noting that prioritizing the most deprived was the most effective way to support children. The delegation suggested that, instead of "value-for-money", UNICEF use only terms on which Member States had agreed, such as results-based budgeting, impact and evaluation.

174. Delegations welcomed the United Nations organizations' coordinated approach to developing their strategic plans. They requested clear information on UNICEF contributions to the United Nations system common approach to delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals and how inter-agency synergies could be ensured. They called upon UNICEF to provide a coherent, integrated vision supported by concrete results and resource requirements. The plan's narrative should combine with the Integrated Budget, Results Framework, Gender Action Plan and Theory of Change. They sought indicators for QCPR directives on partnership, transparency, human development, the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and the organization's contribution to integrated approaches at country level. They added that the draft plan should reflect results-based budgeting, sustainability and other reviews and evaluations.

175. Another group of delegations requested that the revised draft plan present: (a) a clear business model laying out the organization's differentiated approach to various operating contexts based on its comparative advantages; (a) a spelled-out programming approach, including lessons learned from the previous strategic plan and clear results statements on UNICEF commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit; (c) UNICEF plans to use its core budgets; (d) plans to align its organizational structure and staffing to deliver on the five strategic goals, showing how cross-sector work can contribute to multiple impacts; and (e) a clearer Theory of Change, reflecting United Nations Development Group guidelines and results-based management.

176. In a common statement addressed to the United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), a group of delegations welcomed the common chapter of the strategic plans and requested more information on the innovative, collaborative ways in which the organizations were working together, which should be detailed in both the common chapter and individual agency strategic plans, budgets and frameworks. The group called for the news ways of working to be reflected in common results statements, indicators and implementation modalities and said its delegations looked forward to seeing revised plans and frameworks that reflected greater coherence, efficiency and effectiveness in agencies' operational work.

177. One delegation suggested that the common chapter should highlight the funds and programmes' "collaborative advantage" areas, such as climate and gender, and humanitarian-development-peace nexus considerations. It was important to begin with universal, common challenges for all countries before addressing context-specific challenges.

178. A group of delegations commended UNICEF for its contribution to humanitarian emergencies through a principled needs-based approach. They saw the draft plan as an opportunity to integrate planning and reporting of humanitarian action into UNICEF frameworks and help to bridge the humanitarian development divide, both within UNICEF and system-wide.

179. They stressed that mutually accountable, effective leadership was a necessary feature of successful humanitarian coordination. They considered the number of Humanitarian Coordinator candidates proposed by and selected from UNICEF as a strong indicator of its engagement in the coordination system and commitment to the achievement of collective outcomes. They urged UNICEF to ensure greater numbers of qualified UNICEF staff in the Humanitarian Coordinator candidate pool and to support staff during their placement as humanitarian coordinators.

180. They urged UNICEF to work with humanitarian country teams to ensure that timely, impartial joint needs-assessments were conducted in every crisis, to participate in such assessments and to ensure that assessment results informed the UNICEF contribution to common response plans and the prioritization of funding appeals.

181. The group said that a gender-equality analysis, including sex-disaggregated statistics, should be mainstreamed to ensure that the humanitarian needs of women, men, girls and boys were met, and their needs and opportunities were reflected in activities.

182. The group also commended UNICEF for its continued role in supporting and leading global and country-level efforts to address gender-based violence in emergencies, including UNICEF leadership of the Steering Committee of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies. They said UNICEF should continue its support of the global community of practice in developing and applying effective gender-based violence prevention and response interventions in humanitarian settings, and should expand gender-based violence response and prevention programmes at country level.

183. UNICEF was encouraged to share best practices on using innovation to deliver humanitarian assistance with other United Nations system organizations and the Secretariat to catalyse and amplify United Nations innovation work.

184. The same group of delegations requested that UNICEF commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit be reflected in outcome-level results and associated indicators so Member States could track progress in annual reports. On multi-year financing, UNICEF should provide needs estimates and outcome statements and indicators beyond a single calendar year in humanitarian appeals.

185. Given UNICEF high spending on humanitarian action, accountability and transparency were increasingly important. Delegations requested that all United Nations organizations take action to mitigate fraud, waste and abuse and to identify a way to share incident reports and related information.

186. Delegations noted that UNICEF played a critical role in improving the protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs) by participating in the cluster system. UNICEF should work with other humanitarian actors to improve the reach and impact of efforts to meet the needs of IDPs.

187. The Executive Board adopted decision 2017/8 (see annex I).

C. Annual report on the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2014–2017

188. Following introductory remarks by the Acting President of the Executive Board, the Deputy Executive Director for Programmes introduced the annual report on the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2014–2017 (E/ICEF/2017/9 and annex), which was then presented by the Principal Advisor for Gender, Rights and Development.

189. Delegations highlighted UNICEF achievements in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, particularly in its four targeted gender priority areas. They welcomed UNICEF initiatives with boys to protect them from abuse, recruitment by armed groups, and drug addiction, as well as actions promoting the health of adolescent girls and boys and integrating gender equality at all levels.

190. A group of delegations expressed concern with findings of shortcomings in UNICEF capacity to mainstream gender equality throughout its programmes, particularly at the country level and in applying gender equality as a cross-cutting theme. They noted that the shortcomings were due to the absence of gender-based analysis during programme design and delivery and/or the lack of sex-disaggregated and intersectoral data in baselines and monitoring information. They commended UNICEF for taking action on gender, including launching an initiative to promote gender capacity and credentials and increasing support to gender at regional and country levels.

191. The same group urged UNICEF to strengthen gender mainstreaming in the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, including the new Gender Action Plan, and to prioritize three areas for improvement: (a) strengthening institutional capacity and accountability systems to undertake comprehensive gender-based analysis of projects and programmes; (b) strengthening institutional capacity to collect, monitor and report on data disaggregated by sex, age, disability, ethnicity, income, geographical location and other relevant characteristics, particularly at the country level, and the capacity of UNICEF to contribute data for global indicators on the Sustainable Development Goals; and (c) ensuring that the Gender Action Plan reflects men and boys as integral to a gender perspective, acknowledging their roles and responsibilities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and in addressing root causes of gender-based discrimination and transforming harmful social norms and attitudes.

192. They noted that such improvements would help UNICEF align its approach with that of the United Nation system and with the system's commitment to advancing gender equality. This would include the next generation of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and corresponding country-level scorecard, as well as UNICEF policies in that area.

193. The group called upon UNICEF to more clearly reflect those three areas in the Strategic Plan and results framework and the Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021. This should include specific results statements and indicators, annual and cumulative reporting, greater allocation of resources, and articulation of gender equality as a more prominent guiding principle in all goal areas. This should also be firmly grounded in a human rights and gender-responsive approach, acknowledging lessons and affirming the potential leverage capacity of gender mainstreaming in achieving transformative interventions.

194. Further, delegations recommended that UNICEF align its work on gender equality with that of other United Nations organizations, particularly UN-Women and UNFPA, to reduce duplication and pool expertise. UNICEF needed to explain how it planned to work with other entities, using clear indicators measuring contributions to achieving common results.

195. The Executive Board took note of the annual report on the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2014–2017.

D. UNICEF programme cooperation

(a) Approval of country programme documents

196. The Regional Director presented the country programme for Cameroon, 2018–2021 (E/ICEF/2017/P/L.3).

197. The representative of Cameroon welcomed implementation of the country programme and the close cooperation between the government and UNICEF throughout the planning and drafting process. The representative said the cooperation would facilitate the attainment of the country programme objectives, particularly in combating malnutrition and child mortality, supporting school attendance, and combating all forms of violence and abuse against children. Those goals would be achieved through the plans carried out in synergy with other United Nations organizations.

198. The Regional Director reaffirmed the determination of UNICEF at country, regional and global levels to partner with Cameroon in attaining their shared goals.

199. The Executive Board approved the CPD for Cameroon, on a no-objection basis, in decision 2017/5 (see annex 1).

(b) Extensions of ongoing country programmes

200. The President said that, in accordance with Executive Board decision 2009/11, the Executive Board had been informed of the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for Lesotho, Liberia and Nicaragua, as approved by the Executive Director. Those proposals were presented in document E/ICEF/2017/P/L.4.

201. The Executive Board was requested to take note of the one-year extensions of the country programmes for Lesotho, Liberia and Nicaragua, as approved by the Executive Director.

E. Evaluation reports, and management perspective and response

Annual report for 2016 on the evaluation function in UNICEF, and management perspective

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF): Review of development effectiveness, 2012–2015, and management response

202. Following introductory remarks by the President, the Director of Evaluation, introduced the annual report for 2016 on the evaluation function in UNICEF (E/ICEF/2017/11). The Deputy Executive Director, Management, presented the management perspective on the annual report (UNICEF/2017/EB/6). The Director of Evaluation then presented the evaluation report entitled "Review of development effectiveness, 2012–2015, and management response", available on the Evaluation Office website. The Deputy Executive Director for Field Results presented the management response.

203. A group of delegations noted that the last Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) review had rated UNICEF as mature and confident, with system processes fit for purpose, according to its mandate and mission. While those conducting the review said they were pleased with its findings, the review had identified areas for improvement.

204. First, UNICEF needed to develop different approaches, roles and functions for various operating contexts. Further, UNICEF should base its assistance on its

comparative advantages, and determine areas where other organizations had a stake and engage in joint programming. UNICEF should identify areas with a child focus but where UNICEF did not have a comparative advantage, and look to other organizations to take the lead. The Strategic Plan and Integrated Budget should reflect those approaches for future country programmes.

205. The review had concluded that the sustainability of results in UNICEF programmes was weak, owing to weak risk management and cost-efficiency. The group recommended that UNICEF use country systems to build sustainable capacity.

206. On evaluation, UNICEF needed to step up evaluation using robust evaluative evidence of the efficiency and sustainability of UNICEF programming. UNICEF also needed to systematically integrate lessons learned from evaluations and make better use of them.

207. The group of delegations noted that the review had emphasized the need for UNICEF to focus on building local capacity and strengthening strategic partnerships at the country level. UNICEF should also improve its coordination efforts to act in partnership with other United Nations organizations and national and international partners, as it could reach its goals only through partnerships and a coordinated United Nations system.

208. They noted that the review had stressed the need for stronger results-based management and results logic and for country strategies that set out measurable results and the rationales for prioritization. Monitoring had to be based on strong evidence using indicators disaggregated by sex and other relevant characteristics.

209. The group encouraged delegations to join MOPAN and Member States to make use of publicly available assessments. MOPAN knowledge was intended to contribute to organizational learning within and among multilateral organizations and other stakeholders.

210. A group of delegations welcomed improvements highlighted in the annual report of the evaluation function, in particular the increased number of evaluations conducted in 2016 and the high management-response rate. They supported management's suggestion to examine why some evaluations had no follow-up.

211. The group were pleased to see the UNICEF contribution to the independent system-wide evaluation of United Nations operational activities for development, and encouraged UNICEF to continue to engage with the United Nations Evaluation Group.

212. The group of delegations commended UNICEF for its role in evaluation coherence at the global level and its partnership with key evaluation organizations, such as EvalPartners, the Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation and the Eurasian Regional Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation.

213. They stressed that UNICEF had to ground its commitment to learning and improvement in a comprehensive, thorough, assertive and independent evaluation function. UNICEF should present all evaluation documents, including major strategic evaluations, to the Executive Board to allow it to fulfil its oversight role. They encouraged UNICEF to widely share lessons learned and recommendations both internally and with external stakeholders.

214. The group welcomed the UNICEF management response, especially the proposal to increase evaluation coverage to all regions and cross-cutting issues. They highlighted that gender equality should receive particular attention to improve evidence-based mainstreaming across UNICEF work. They commended the increasing quality of evaluations, including for sector-wide approaches and

programmes criteria. UNICEF had also to use gender analysts to inform evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations.

215. The group expressed appreciation for the fact that two thematic evaluations on humanitarian assistance were planned for 2017 and encouraged UNICEF to increase the number of evaluations on humanitarian assistance and its nexus with development programming, according to the share of the budget. UNICEF should also strengthen impact-level evaluations.

216. The role of regional and country offices was fundamental in implementing evaluation recommendations and incorporating lessons learned into programming. UNICEF management should strongly engage in evaluations and their follow-up.

217. Given the importance of the evaluation function for UNICEF institutional strengthening, including more effective programming, the group iterated the spending goal of 1 per cent of UNICEF programme expenditure on evaluations, and asked UNICEF to present plans to meet it.

218. The group noted that the review of development effectiveness provided useful, welcome analysis, and a number of recommendations for strengthening UNICEF development effectiveness, particularly in results-based management, gender-based analysis, and innovation.

219. The group emphasized that many review findings were also reflected in the MOPAN assessment, adding weight to the recommendations. They urged UNICEF to take concrete actions to implement the recommendations and reflect them in the Strategic Plan and results framework.

220. In accordance with the QCPR, the group encouraged UNICEF to strengthen its results-based management frameworks to the levels of other United Nations organizations. The draft Strategic Plan results framework, they noted, did not adequately reflect the United Nations development system's guidelines, with a clear theory of change.

221. The Executive Board adopted decision 2017/9 (see annex I).

F. Office of Internal Audit and Investigations 2016 annual report to the Executive Board, and management response

UNICEF Audit Advisory Committee 2016 annual report

222. Following introductory remarks by the President, the Director of the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations (OIAI) presented the report (E/ICEF/2017/AB/L.2), with the management response (E/ICEF/2017/AB/L.3), presented by the Deputy Executive Director, Management. The Audit Advisory Committee annual report for 2016 was available on the Executive Board website.

223. A group of delegations commended UNICEF for the high rate of implementation of audit recommendations in 2016. They appreciated OIAI conformity with Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) standards and its collaboration with other United Nations audit services. It commended UNICEF for the considerable reduction in the number of outstanding recommendations older than 18 months, with remaining actions to be completed by the end of June 2017. They inquired about the lower number of completed internal audits in 2016.

224. The group encouraged OIAI to provide further analysis of key organizational issues and risks, how effectively UNICEF was addressing them and how they affected the organization's reputation.

225. The group urged UNICEF to look into the reasons for the strongly qualified or adverse ratings of five internal audits, and address identified gaps or weaknesses to lower the number of unsatisfactory ratings in future.

226. While recognizing progress in results-based management and reporting, governance and accountability, and supply and logistics, the group noted that they still constituted 63 per cent of agreed actions, and urged UNICEF to prioritize action for improvement.

227. Noting weaknesses in control and compliance gaps in key processes and the risk area of funding and stakeholder relations, they sought clarification on these areas.

228. While recognizing that recovery of losses to fraud and other abuse took time, the group expressed concern with the continued low level of recovery and encouraged UNICEF to continue to strengthen its control over third parties to minimize losses and boost recovery processes, including through the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers. Recalling the 2016 Joint Inspection Unit report on fraud prevention, detection and response in the United Nations system, the group encouraged UNICEF to continue implementing the report's recommendations.

229. The delegations commended OIAI for the increased focus on fraud risk management. They asked why the number was so low for reported cases for investigation, given the scale, complexity and often high-risk contexts of UNICEF activities. Underreporting constituted a concern. They urged UNICEF to intensify efforts to detect and report fraudulent actions and suspicions on misuse of funds for further investigation, and to secure a strong whistle-blower protection policy and internal speak-up culture.

230. The group stressed the need for a strong, independent audit and investigations function for transparency and accountability and called upon UNICEF to allocate sufficient resources for this function.

231. The Executive Board adopted decision 2017/10 (see annex I).

G. Report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2016

232. The Principal Adviser of the Ethics Office, presented the report (E/ICEF/2017/10).

233. A group of delegations commended the Ethics Office for its contribution to promoting higher standards of ethics, integrity and accountability in UNICEF. They said the Ethics Office played a vital role in delivering training to UNICEF staff to raise awareness on UNICEF standards and values. The office had received and worked on 321 requests for its services in 2016, the majority of them related to guidance on ethics.

234. The group commended the office for advising staff and management on dealing with conflicts of interest or outside activities. They welcomed the successful collaboration with the ethics offices of other United Nations organizations, especially the collaborative launch of the online training on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse in 2017. Given the significant increase in requests for ethics services, they encouraged UNICEF to continue its support to the Ethics Office and ensure it had that sufficient resources.

235. They noted that the report of the Ethics Office reflected the absence of a standard procedure for its involvement in standards-setting and policy support. They appreciated management efforts to devise a comprehensive and transparent procedure for the office's involvement in these areas.

236. They requested that UNICEF address the issues raised in the report, and analyse and act on the results of the Global Staff Survey 2017. They recommended that UNICEF strengthen staff training on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, and strongly engage in United Nations system-wide work in that area.

237. They stressed that UNICEF should pay particular attention to staff perceptions of their ability to speak up, which was critical for the health of the organization. The tone from the top had to be clear and convincing, communicating that retaliation for reporting misconduct was unacceptable and that retaliators would be held accountable. They said that a speak-up culture would allow the organization to address potentially harmful situations before they became systematic.

238. A listening culture was equally important in nurturing a culture of ethics at UNICEF. The group welcomed future reporting on steps taken by UNICEF to strengthen both a speak-up and listening culture on ethics.

239. The Executive Board took note of the report of the UNICEF Ethics Office for 2016.

H. Address by the Chairperson of the UNICEF Global Staff Association

240. In her address to the Executive Board, the Chairperson of the Global Staff Association (GSA) highlighted efforts UNICEF had made to address the issues raised at the 2016 annual session and pointed to current and future challenges.

241. The 2017 Global Staff Survey had a high response rate of 79 per cent of staff and survey results confirmed high motivation and overall satisfaction of staff. It also showed that UNICEF had to improve on personal empowerment, career development and recruitment and promotions. The GSA had proposed a new partnership approach on following up on the survey results where staff have equal ownership along with management in identifying and addressing issues that affect staff.

242. The Chairperson reported that the Global Shared Services Centre based in Budapest had made progress in improving transactional efficiency and cost savings. It has also freed up staff time to focus on upstream work for better programme delivery.

243. The GSA and the Division of Human Resources had made a number of recommendations to improve staff security and working conditions in emergency duty stations, which management had committed to implement in a phased approach.

244. On efforts to improve staff mobility and rotation, she noted that 55 out of 88 staff members had been successfully placed in the 2016 managed rotation exercise. Lessons from this first round were being reflected in the second round in 2017.

245. She pointed out that UNICEF had begun the process to grant continuing appointments in lieu of the previous permanent contracts discontinued by the United Nations. In 2017, it is estimated that approximately 1,500 staff who met the established criteria would benefit. She added that this exercise would be conducted annually. This, along with the longer fixed-term five-year contracts introduced in September 2016, was expected to enhance job security and improve staff morale.

246. She stressed that the GSA was actively advocating to improve health and medical insurance for staff serving in hardship duty stations, pushing for the United Nations joint medical staff to review and recommend the establishment of minimum health standards. Another concern was the high levels of stress among staff in all

duty stations, revealed by the 2015 United Nations-wide mental-health survey. The increase in the number of staff counsellors was helping to address that issue.

247. She highlighted initiatives such as ACHIEVE, the new performance management system, as well as decentralized recruitment, which had given more authority to hiring managers, hastened the hiring process and allowed for lateral movement. However, on the latter issues, she stressed the need for holding hiring managers accountable for their decisions to ensure fairness and transparency in the recruitment processes.

248. Turning to the General Assembly approval of the International Civil Service Commission proposal to reduce entitlements and benefits for international Professional staff, the GSA highlighted that the decision would mostly negatively impact staff in emergencies and affect their morale. Meanwhile, the GSA along with other United Nations staff unions, was actively engaged in discussions on the review of the compensation package for national staff (General Service and National Professional categories), which also included a review of the recruitment policy for the National Professional category of staff.

249. In closing, the GSA Chairperson highlighted a number of ongoing staff-led initiatives to: (a) increase awareness of, and engage in greening initiatives, taking advantage of the special fund for environment-focused office initiatives and accessibility for persons with disabilities; (b) establish a support group for staff who were parents of children with disabilities; and (c) raise funds from UNICEF staff to support the response to emergencies.

I. Reports on the field visits of the Executive Board

Report on the field visit of members of the Bureau of the Executive Board to Lesotho and South Africa, from 3 to 10 March 2017

250. The report of the field visit to Lesotho and South Africa (UNICEF/2017/EB/7) was introduced by H. E. Mr. Walton Alfonso Webson, Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations.

251. The delegation had the chance to view concrete examples of UNICEF work and cooperation with governments and partners, including the United Nations country team, and gave them the opportunity to better understand issues and challenges facing children and women in Lesotho and South Africa.

252. The delegation was pleased with the excellent cooperation between UNICEF and government institutions in developing programmes on norms and standards and formulation of key policies affecting children. They were impressed with the sharp focus of UNICEF work on the organization's comparative advantages.

253. They appreciated the clear focus on the most vulnerable populations and disadvantaged geographical areas. UNICEF efforts to strengthen data disaggregation to reveal social disparities as a basis for advocacy and programme planning were important and evident. They also noted the importance of maintaining a minimum level of core programme resources to sustain the capacity of UNICEF to provide high-level technical advice and influence policies.

254. The Bureau participants said they felt the two country programmes had made effective, meaningful impact, and the welcomed the successful emphasis on national ownership.

255. The participants expressed concern about the persistent sexual violence against children and harmful traditional practices regarding child marriage, as well as the severe challenges for children with disabilities.

256. UNICEF engagement with partners, civil society, communities, local organizations and the private sector provided good examples of the added value and multiplier effect that UNICEF contributed in both countries.

257. Bureau participants noted the good cooperation within the United Nations country teams and congratulated UNICEF for the partnership established on the national level with ministries and local authorities, as well as partnerships at the provincial and community levels.

258. They also appreciated the organization's role in supporting the Governments in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and protecting the rights of children and women.

259. The delegation noted that the 'middle-income country' category was not appropriate for South Africa, given the significant increase in HIV. They also noted that children in middle-income countries needed specific services and that many South Africans were not benefitting from the post-Apartheid economic growth, and there were enormous disparities in wealth.

260. There were no comments from Executive Board members.

261. The Executive Board took note of the report.

Report on the field visit of the Executive Board to Egypt and Lebanon, from 21 to 30 March 2017

262. The report of the field visit to Egypt and Lebanon (UNICEF/2017/EB/8) was introduced by Mr. Marwan Francis, Deputy Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations.

263. In the report, the delegation expressed appreciation for the dedication and hard work of the UNICEF staff and partners. UNICEF was doing impressive work in delivering results on a wide range of issues affecting children, including Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All (WASH); health and nutrition; education; life skills support and the youth employability; female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C); child marriage and the interfaith dialogue.

264. The visit had given the delegation important insight into the national challenges and operational contexts, including the income inequality, youth bulge, youth unemployment and overstretched public services. They appreciated the clear focus of UNICEF on the most vulnerable population groups and the most disadvantaged geographical areas.

265. UNICEF engagement with civil society, community centres and faith-based organizations were good examples of its value-added in bringing partners together. They welcomed the UNICEF strategy to influence policies, legislation and public spending in favour of the most disadvantaged.

266. The Executive Board delegation recommended greater focus on gender equality. Gender-disaggregated data were sometimes collected, but not always, and there was limited evidence of analysis and use of data to improve programming. There was the need for greater focus on the specific needs and circumstances of girls, not only in dealing with girl-specific challenges, such as child marriage and FGM/C, but also in education, WASH, protection, and health and nutrition.

267. UNICEF needed to focus more at the outcome level. The results of UNICEF activities were not always measured at that level, but were rather measured at the activity or output level. Reporting at the outcome level would provide important information on what the programme was achieving and improvements needed. It

could also contribute to greater resource mobilization, improving coordination with other United Nations organizations.

268. The United Nations country teams in both countries said that working together was often a challenge and that insufficient incentives existed for joint programming and increased collaboration. The delegation recommended that UNICEF continue to pursue coordination and identify practical ways to minimize potential overlaps.

269. On the innovation approach, UNICEF should continue to play a key role in implementing innovative projects, especially in the sphere of youth training and employment, and draw on successful experience from other countries if necessary.

270. The delegation recommended that UNICEF maintain its focus on supporting the Governments of Egypt and Lebanon in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly protecting and fulfilling the rights of children and women.

271. In response, the representative of the Russian Federation said UNICEF provision of basic needs to refugees from the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic was impressive as was ensuring cooperation with local governments and populations, including by extending medical coverage and increasing trust in the health-care system. The delegation valued UNICEF efforts to combat child labour and welcomed the implementation of a pilot programme to pay for scholarships and incentivize students to stay in school. Delegation members were convinced that such programmes had to be extended to cover all vulnerable regions of Lebanon with high concentrations of refugees and high risk of child labour. The delegation also noted the results of the country office in Egypt in health care, education, social integration, and capacity-building at the local level.

272. The representative of Lebanon noted that, as a middle-income country with multidimensional challenges, Lebanon attached great importance to the work of UNICEF, particularly in strengthening the country's capacities to meet the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development objectives. Lebanon had welcomed approximately 1.2 million refugees fleeing the war-torn Syrian Arab Republic.

273. Lebanese communities opened schools, clinics and homes to hundreds of thousands of fleeing Syrians. Despite the concerted efforts, the needs of affected populations of both displaced and host communities were outpacing the ability of the Government and partners to provide adequate services to reach the most vulnerable. The delegation hoped the field mission had raised awareness of the continued support needed.

274. The Executive Board took note of the report.

J. Other matters

Provisional list of agenda items for the second regular session of 2017

275. The provisional list of agenda items for the second regular session of 2017 was presented by the Secretary of the Executive Board.

K. Adoption of draft decisions

276. The Executive Board adopted decisions 2017/5, 2017/7, 2017/8, 2017/9 and 2017/10 (see annex I).

L. UNICEF Staff Team Awards and closing statements by the Executive Director of UNICEF and the President of the Executive Board

277. The Executive Director announced the winners of the 2016 UNICEF Staff Team Awards, which recognized efforts of UNICEF staff around the world:

(a) The Iraq UNICEF country office WASH team was recognized for supporting internally displaced families seeking refuge in host communities and camps. The programme pioneered and launched innovative WASH service centres to coordinate and manage WASH services in settlements of IDPs. The centres, 15 in all, brought together NGOs, civil society groups and local governments to manage and coordinate services throughout the settlements, while delivering basic first aid for newly arrived IDPs. An innovative feature of the centres was that most of the staff running them were IDPs, living in the camp or in nearby host communities.

(b) The South Sudan country office and the East and Southern Africa Regional Office Situation Centre. Despite heavy fighting and personal danger, the majority of the team remained in the country, supported by colleagues in the Situation Centre in Nairobi, to provide critical lifesaving humanitarian support to desperately affected people. More than 40,000 people were internally displaced in and around Juba and approximately 10,000 IDPs were housed at the United Nations Tong Ping base. A cholera outbreak risked reversing key results. Thanks to staff members' determination and commitment, UNICEF scaled up its support to women and children in the country.

(c) Colleagues in the Brazzaville Local Staff Association of UNICEF in the Republic of the Congo. The association introduced a number of new activities that had lifted the spirits of the staff members in the office, contributing to a better work environment. In collaboration with the country office's management and the Global Staff Association, the association introduced new activities, such as driver awards.

278. In closing remarks, the Executive Director assured Executive Board members of the continuing UNICEF commitment to engage in discussions on both the draft Strategic Plan and the Integrated Budget so that both would be ready for adoption at the second regular session of 2017 and set for implementation beginning in 2018.

279. The President highlighted the success of the session and the six decisions the Executive Board had adopted. He said that the annual report demonstrated that, despite tremendous challenges in 2017, UNICEF had been able to achieve notable results for children and families in the seven outcome areas of the Strategic Plan and the cross-cutting areas in which it worked. He noted that the Executive Board looked forward to continuing close engagement with UNICEF in finalizing the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, which would be presented along with Integrated Budget at the second regular session 2017.

Part three
Second regular session 2017

Held at United Nations Headquarters from 12 to 15 September 2017

I. Organization of the session

A. Opening statements by the President of the Executive Board and the Executive Director of UNICEF

280. The President highlighted that the opening of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, which coincided with the second regular session of the Executive Board, was especially meaningful for UNICEF because it stimulated the organization to reflect on how it could support the work of the United Nations to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to leave no one behind.

281. He stressed that UNICEF should give its full support to the United Nations reform agenda, while working to ensure that it was practical and brought about greater collaboration among United Nations development system organizations, with a focus on results at the national level and real progress in scaling up those results. He saw the need for the Executive Boards of the funds and programmes to reconsider their purpose and structure to make them more meaningful and effective and suggested expanding the term of the Bureaux of the Boards and rethinking the role of the Presidents as part of the accountability mechanism for resident coordinators. He looked forward to discussing those proposals with the other Boards.

282. Noting the achievements that he had observed on field visits, the President stressed that UNICEF should study each success story to determine how to foster comparable results in other communities, countries and regions. In order to scale up its most promising results, UNICEF required a better understanding of how and why initiatives had succeeded. This demanded communication, the sharing of best practices, rigorous and impartial evaluation and the collection and analysis of disaggregated data. The organization's results focus had to hone in on the most disadvantaged in the most difficult settings.

283. On the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, he commended the four funds and programmes for their constructive collaboration and commitment in developing the common chapter that would form the backbone of their respective strategic plans and the collective scaffolding for addressing cross-cutting issues, based on their individual comparative advantages and tailored to country-specific needs.

284. The President cited the promise of the proposed reform agenda for the United Nations, but he stressed that the reform process should not delay the adoption of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 at the second regular session, in order to enable UNICEF to embark on the next phase of its work beginning in January 2018.

285. He expressed his sense of honour at having served as President of the UNICEF Board in 2017, and reaffirmed his intention to continue to be engaged in global issues regarding the rights of children.

286. The Executive Director thanked the President for his wise, practical and determined leadership in 2017 and the Board members for their collaboration, commitment and guidance in helping UNICEF to draft the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, which positioned the organization to seize the opportunities of the next four years to fight for the rights of children.

287. He cautioned that a host of challenges could work to narrow those opportunities. Eroding confidence in public institutions, mistrust of international cooperation and pressures on traditional aid were major constraints. They coexisted in a world of metastatic humanitarian emergencies compounded by climate change, natural disasters, competition for resources, inequality, the unrealized promises of globalization and rising nationalism — all putting children in harm's way and

forcing many to become migrants. He spoke of the effect of national strife on children in Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen.

288. The Executive Director reaffirmed the commitment of UNICEF to reach every child and to protect the rights of children everywhere. In its assistance to beleaguered communities and in its support to Governments in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and serving the most disadvantaged through nutrition, education, protection and health care, UNICEF was working on practical peacebuilding — making societies stronger and more resilient. Achieving those results and fulfilling the rights of every child everywhere were at the core of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, which was grounded in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Sustainable Development Goals and the principles of equity and leaving no one behind.

289. The Strategic Plan not only laid out what UNICEF would achieve in four years, but also foresaw a UNICEF: (a) that was more efficient and cost-effective; (b) that better managed results through a results-focused culture and associated systems; (c) whose programmes were increasingly integrated across sectors; (d) whose partnerships were broader and more strategic; and (e) whose support base was the largest in its history, tens-of-millions strong.

290. He pointed to early childhood development, gender and urbanization as areas in which UNICEF would ensure a cross-sectoral approach. Similarly, UNICEF would design and deliver its emergency programmes not only around immediate relief, but also with a purpose of future resilience, for example, through the building of stronger national health systems. To buttress those efforts, UNICEF planned to help 30 countries to improve their capacity to collect and analyse disaggregated data for children's programmes.

291. He underscored the importance of partnerships, not only with Governments, civil society, the private sector and Member States, but also with other United Nations development system organizations, as laid out in the 2016 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nation system (QCPR) and as reflected in the common chapter incorporated by the funds and programmes into their respective strategic plans. UNICEF would ensure a closely coordinated inter-agency approach that harnessed each organization's comparative advantages in collective efforts to tackle broad issues, such as poverty eradication and climate change. Pursuing a common front, UNICEF was committed to establishing more cooperative horizontal partnerships and ways of working collaboratively beneficial to all stakeholders, as well as innovation partnerships with businesses, harnessing the power of emerging technologies to improve the lives of children everywhere.

292. UNICEF, he added, had a committed global base of millions of individual supporters who enhanced those partnerships by raising money, campaigning and volunteering for children, building upon the work of the National Committees. A new volunteer initiative — Our UNICEF — was aimed at involving more people in the organization's mission, giving individuals from all walks of life the opportunity to engage in UNICEF work. The goal of the Strategic Plan was to double the number of supporters from 50 million, including doubling the number of pledge and individual donors to 15 million, increasing digital campaign supporters to 75 million and building a volunteer force of 10 million people. He stressed that expanding involvement in UNICEF was beneficial for Governments and the entire United Nations system because more engaged citizens led to the stronger consensus at the national level needed to invest in and reach the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals.

293. The Executive Director called on the Executive Board members and all partners to work together, lending their energy, time, resources and voices to deliver the hope and assistance that every child, society and country needed.

B. Adoption of the provisional annotated agenda, timetable and organization of work

294. The Executive Board adopted the provisional annotated agenda, timetable and organization of work for the session (E/ICEF/2017/14/Rev.1)

295. In accordance with rule 50.2 of the rules of procedure, the Secretary of the Executive Board announced that credentials had been submitted by 41 observer delegations, two intergovernmental organizations, two international organizations, five non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and seven UNICEF National Committees.

C. Proposed programme of work for the Executive Board sessions in 2018

296. The proposed programme of work for the Executive Board sessions in 2018 (E/ICEF/2017/15/Rev.3) was introduced by the Secretary. He mentioned that the proposed programme of work had been prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the Bureau of the Executive Board. The Secretary also highlighted the changes to the programme of work following the discussions of the Board members.

297. The Executive Board adopted decision 2017/15 (see annex I).

II. Deliberations of the Executive Board

A. UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021

298. The President introduced the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 (E/ICEF/2017/17/Rev.1) and the annexed final results framework (E/ICEF/2017/18), including the annex to the common chapter in the respective strategic plans of the funds and programmes for the period 2018–2021, and the Theory of Change Paper, UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 (UNICEF/2017/EB/11).

299. After introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, the Director of the Division of Data, Research and Policy presented the Strategic Plan.

300. Delegations thanked the Executive Director for his visionary leadership, focused on delivering results for children everywhere, and UNICEF staff members for their dedication in protecting the well-being of children around the world, often while working in the most difficult and dangerous contexts.

301. Delegations noted that the plan was balanced and fully aligned with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals and grounded in the principles of leaving no child behind and helping those furthest behind first. They commended UNICEF for the inclusive nature of the consultations with Board members and its commitment to the basic principles of the 2016 QCPR. Other delegations noted the plan's reflection of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, Agenda 2063 of the African Union, the Paris Agreement and the New York Declaration for Refugees and

Migrants. Delegations welcomed the improvements to the plan, which reflected Member State input, the inclusion of lessons learned from the Strategic Plan, 2014-2017 and the adoption of an integrated approach. They welcomed the five Goal Areas and two cross-cutting priorities.

302. Delegations stressed the central role of UNICEF in achieving the 2030 Agenda; without UNICEF support to children, the Sustainable Development Goals could not be reached. UNICEF was needed as much as ever to ensure that the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children were not left behind, whether in the least developed countries, small island developing States or middle-income countries, all of which faced growing vulnerabilities owing to climate change, natural disasters and entrenched poverty and inequality. Delegations called upon UNICEF and all United Nations organizations to adopt a differentiated approach tailored to country needs and contexts, prioritizing the least developed countries and fragile States. They welcomed the plan's respect for national ownership and leadership as the basis for cooperation efforts.

303. Delegations expressed support for the plan's integrated rights-based approach and its focus on realizing the rights of every child, especially the most disadvantaged, and on the needs of adolescents, especially marginalized ones. A group of delegations expressed commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights without discrimination as a fundamental tenet of development assistance. The group underlined the importance of implementing measures to promote and protect the rights of vulnerable people, including through gender equality, decent work and the eradication of child labour. A few delegations welcomed the inclusion of community engagement to address barriers to fulfilling child rights, supporting the inclusive and meaningful participation of children in decision-making and strengthening national systems of accountability and assistance to the most disadvantaged children.

304. Delegations reaffirmed their commitment to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as necessary to achieving the 2030 Agenda. They expressed support for the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2018-2021, which was in alignment with the Strategic Plan, welcomed efforts to raise awareness and fight against harmful practices, such as child and forced marriage, and expected UNICEF to continue to leverage its collaboration with fellow United Nations agencies and other actors at all levels on those issues, as well on maternal and newborn health. They welcomed the commitment of UNICEF to undertake a more rigorous gender-based approach and analysis, including through data disaggregation, and to engage men and boys in transforming social norms.

305. Some delegations highlighted the plan's focus on preventing the root causes of the exploitation and trafficking of children, in particular through the Internet. They supported the plan's cross-cutting priority of protecting and supporting the rights and interests of children with disabilities. Some delegations emphasized the support of the family and family values as a necessary cross-cutting theme. Other delegations welcomed the plan's inclusion of the concept of human security; coherence and complementarity between development aid and humanitarian activities; and the promotion of universal health coverage and responses to key illnesses, including diarrhoea, pneumonia, malaria and tuberculosis.

306. Some delegations also highlighted the critical role of UNICEF in addressing the specific needs of middle-income countries, including addressing vulnerabilities resulting from poverty and inequality, taking into account social and cultural factors. They underlined that UNICEF was key to helping middle-income countries to become more resilient against global financial crises and natural disasters as well as multidimensional challenges resulting from violence, organized crime, the

smuggling of migrants and human and drug trafficking. They called upon UNICEF to continue to address such issues through synergies with stakeholders, including South-South and triangular cooperation, and to enhance national and local development initiatives and capacities. Similarly, they urged UNICEF to continue to address the particular development needs and goals of middle-income countries, landlocked developing countries, least developed countries and small island developing States and promote innovative models of engagement tailored to the national context, including in countries transitioning from middle-income to high-income status. UNICEF should continue to work with those countries, promoting innovative models of engagement tailored to the national context. They reiterated the need to strengthen the involvement of UNICEF through the presence of country offices.

307. Several delegations drew attention to the role of UNICEF in addressing the specific needs of children in the least developed countries, in particular regarding hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy, abuse, disease and discrimination. Climate change, natural disasters and conflict only worsened those challenges and further marginalized those children. They commended the passionate approach of UNICEF to protecting and promoting children's rights, particularly in emergencies and humanitarian crises.

308. Delegations welcomed the strong results focus of the Strategic Plan, which would provide the platform to improve the UNICEF capacity to operate as a results-based, innovative organization delivering measurable results for children globally. They appreciated the importance given to innovation in the plan, including a specific indicator in the results framework. They looked forward to systematic, analytical annual reporting on the Strategic Plan and on UNICEF follow-up to the QCPR. They encouraged further work to ensure consistency between the provisions of the QCPR and the indicators in the common chapter. They also requested regular reporting on the development of disaggregated data, which should play a crucial role in the documentation of UNICEF efforts to reach the most marginalized children. Delegations saw the midterm review of the Strategic Plan as an appropriate moment to incorporate changes into the plan, including the common chapter and Integrated Results and Resource Framework, on the basis on the outcome of intergovernmental processes following the Secretary-General's final reform report.

309. Several delegations welcomed the integration of humanitarian assistance as a cross-cutting theme, as UNICEF was a key global player in bridging the humanitarian-development divide. They recognized the need to integrate the humanitarian work of UNICEF with long-term development goals, in line with the mechanisms for the coordination of humanitarian assistance. They also highlighted that host countries were the main drivers of the development and relief efforts within their territories in accordance with each country's national legislation. UNICEF was active in important initiatives to improve humanitarian action while reducing the humanitarian workload by strengthening prevention, preparedness and resilience. Delegations called upon UNICEF, as a dual-mandate organization, to lead the way in those discussions and on the ground. Delegations also encouraged more comprehensive reporting on UNICEF work on humanitarian needs and the implementation of its World Humanitarian Summit and Grand Bargain commitments.

310. Delegations supported the Secretary-General's vision for a stronger, integrated, coherent and more effective United Nations development system. They were pleased that UNICEF had made a commitment to working more effectively and collaboratively with other United Nations development system organizations, including on joint assessments and common results and indicators, in line with the

2016 QCPR. They strongly encouraged UNICEF to continue to develop innovative partnerships and programming approaches that would make a transformative contribution to strengthening the United Nations system in support of the Secretary-General's reform agenda and expected UNICEF to take a lead role in driving the reform agenda forward.

311. Delegations were pleased to see the common chapter of the four funds and programmes integrated into the Strategic Plan, although they urged UNICEF to ensure that the principles of the common chapter informed the implementation of the new plan and included ongoing joint analysis, planning and programming, especially in crises and conflicts.

312. Delegations fully endorsed the UNICEF priorities of greater efficiency, effectiveness and innovation, which would enable it to better husband its resources to fulfil its mission to serve every child, everywhere. They encouraged UNICEF to continue to make efficient use of resources, prioritize front-line delivery, establish clear accountability for results and ensure transparency in the use of resources. They sought greater cross-sector programming across the Goal Areas to ensure multiple-level impacts and welcomed the focus of the integrated budget on programme activities as well as on efficiency in the institutional budget. They called for United Nations organizations to significantly reduce management costs, including by harmonizing partnership agreements and providing transparent and comparable cost structures; simplify reporting requirements and harmonize them with those of other United Nations organizations; and, in coordination with other humanitarian agencies, provide a needs assessment for each crisis to inform strategic decisions and prioritized appeals.

313. Underscoring the importance of flexible, predictable, multi-year, non-earmarked funding, delegations encouraged Member States to increase their contributions to UNICEF core resources to ensure that the organization could deliver on its mandate. They also stressed the need to address the core/non-core imbalance. They welcomed the partnership-expanding Our UNICEF initiative and urged the organization to continue to expand the donor base through strategic partnerships and innovative financing approaches, including with the private sector, and through enhanced partnerships with Governments, civil society and the United Nations system. They commended the UNICEF strategy to develop and leverage the power of business and markets as a driver of change for children.

314. A group of delegations noted with concern the decline of official development assistance allocated to middle-income countries and the trend of the United Nations development system to reduce its activities and programmes in those countries. They urged UNICEF and the United Nations development system to help middle-income countries to avert losses in progress already made, requesting that the United Nations development system continue to pursue a universal, holistic, transparent and interlinked approach to development.

315. The representative of the Standing Group of National Committees noted that the contributions of National Committees represented the largest source of funding to core resources. The National Committees continued to invest in techniques and activities with the potential to generate flexible funding. Since raising resources demanded making advance investments, the National Committees supported the Investment Fund Strategy outlined in the Strategic Plan. They also supported a virtuous cycle to advance the cause of children: clear results reporting and better investments that attracted more contributions. Those fundraising investments encompassed a push towards more voluntarism, advocacy and partnerships involving all stakeholders, including civil society, of which the Committees were an

integral part. The National Committees were also important in mobilizing volunteers for children across the globe.

316. The NGO Committee on UNICEF welcomed the UNICEF commitment to the participation of children and youth, and encouraged their substantial and meaningful participation in the implementation and evaluation of the Strategic Plan. The Committee called attention to Goal Area 5, and stressed that equity must cut across all areas of work to reach the furthest behind first, of which children on the move were a special group. They looked forward to establishing partnerships to ensure the rights of the most vulnerable and excluded children, especially to address multidimensional poverty in the implementation of all five Goal Areas; embrace universality; honour commitments to provide quality education for all children; and recognize the most vulnerable and excluded children and address their needs.

317. The Child Fund Alliance commended UNICEF for engaging with civil society in the development of the Strategic Plan and looked forward to its ongoing partnership with UNICEF to promote the full participation of children in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, which included child-friendly accountability. In support of the achievement of Goal 16.2, the Alliance was giving children the knowledge and skills to engage stakeholders, participate in decision-making and planning and transform negative social norms that contributed to violence against children. The Alliance expressed appreciation to the Executive Director for his leadership as Board Co-Chair of the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children.

318. World Vision commended UNICEF for the extensive consultation process and engagement with stakeholders, including children, in the development of the Strategic Plan. It was pleased with the Executive Board's commitment to ensuring that UNICEF continued to deliver for children, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalized. It stood ready to work in partnership with UNICEF to achieve outcomes for children, and welcomed the common chapter aimed at strengthening the collaborative work of the United Nations development system – an enhancement that would bring to scale the collaboration of World Vision with the United Nations. It welcomed the plan's aligning of the equity approach with sustainability, the clear change strategies, the increased focus on adolescents and the clear indicators for measuring results and accountability.

319. The Executive Board adopted decision 2017/13 (see annex I).

B. Oral update on UNICEF humanitarian action

320. The Vice-President (Belarus) introduced the oral update on UNICEF humanitarian action (UNICEF/2017/EB/13/Rev.1).

321. After remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, the Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, presented the oral update.

322. Delegations commended the staff of UNICEF for their ground work in crisis areas across the globe, and stressed that the organization's crisis interventions formed a central part of its mandate and were crucial for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Thanks to UNICEF, children in crisis zones received nutrition and health services, continued their education and avoided violence. Despite the difficulties encountered, UNICEF continued to work effectively in crisis settings.

323. A group of delegations noted that the international community would not achieve the 2030 Agenda unless it collaborated effectively, drawing on the comparative advantages of each United Nations organization. The international

community had to improve its support to crisis-affected populations by listening to their feedback, strengthening the resilience of people and institutions and advancing crisis management and prevention, on the basis of the principles of humanitarian action set out in General Assembly resolution 46/182. The group welcomed the increased focus of UNICEF on humanitarian action and its commitment to strengthening the coherence and complementarity between humanitarian and development programming in the Strategic Plan.

324. The group encouraged UNICEF to lay out, in future reporting, how and with whom it worked, the challenges it faced and what it had learned and was changing to address those challenges and implement its reform commitments. Future reporting should reflect its role and actions in system-wide initiatives to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action while ultimately reducing the humanitarian workload. Future reporting should cover timelines and milestones for relevant commitments as well as UNICEF efforts to implement the anticipated reform of the United Nations development system and the United Nations peace and security architecture. Reporting should lay out UNICEF experiences and learning processes for important policy issues. UNICEF should also undertake honest deliberations regarding UNICEF challenges and remedial actions in such areas as risk management, securing humanitarian access and improving the staffing situation.

325. The group requested more-detailed information on UNICEF partnerships and on efforts made by the organization to reduce duplication and increase collaboration with other multilateral entities, addressing issues such as joint procurement and programming, common services and the improvement of cluster coordination. Future reporting could address cross-cutting priorities, such the integration of gender equality and gender-based violence, as well as concrete information on the adaptation of UNICEF programming to combine short-term assistance with longer-term interventions. The group invited UNICEF to provide an annual report on humanitarian action at each annual session. The ultimate aim was to sustainably reduce the humanitarian caseload and concentrate resources on furthering sustainable development. Substantive reporting would advance that goal by allowing Member States and UNICEF to adopt the necessary long-term perspective and to continuously improve response and prevention.

326. During the discussion, attention was drawn to the need for flexible, unrestricted resources to drive joint assistance efforts for children in crisis settings. Core resources remained the most effective and efficient contribution type for strengthening the ability of UNICEF to support strategic activities for the delivery of results for every child, particularly the most vulnerable. Core resources also enabled UNICEF to support Governments in developing policies and innovative programmes for children. While flexible funding was critical for UNICEF work in highly fragile and volatile country contexts, the use of core funding for long-term technical support and capacity-building remained invaluable for strengthening government systems, addressing immediate needs and delivering results in the longer term.

327. In reference to the Humanitarian Action for Children 2017 report, the lack of resources for rapid response, particularly for natural disasters, was noted. In this regard, it was stressed that it was important that UNICEF continue to play a major role in helping countries to increase their readiness for natural disasters and their rapid-response capabilities. It also highlighted the need for UNICEF to strengthen cooperation with affected populations and to help to increase their organizational capacity.

328. The representative of Save the Children, drawing attention to the mounting challenges for children in ever-growing crisis settings, welcomed the heightened focus on the most marginalized children in the Strategic Plan. He pointed out, however, that delivering on the collective promise for children would fail without a change in the international community's response to humanitarian crises. Long-term, predictable financing was needed to build resilience and draw countries out of cycles of hunger and drought. Unlocking that funding would require a write-off of some countries' debt arrears, which prevented much needed long-term funding. He underscored the vital role of UNICEF in providing health and education services to refugee children. Save the Children fully supported the UNICEF call for flexible financing for emergency response, multi-year funding for protracted crises and the increased use of cash transfers. He stressed the importance of the work of Save the Children and UNICEF in protecting children in armed conflict, and urged partners to unite in fighting the culture of impunity surrounding crimes against children.

C. UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021

329. Following introductory remarks by the President and the Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, the Principal Adviser for Gender, Rights and Development presented the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021 (E/ICEF/2017/16). The Indicator Matrix (UNICEF/2017/EB/12) was available on the Executive Board website.

330. Delegations welcomed the Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021, noting that it built upon lessons learned from the Gender Action Plan, 2014–2017 and recent evaluations. They appreciated the inclusive process that UNICEF had followed during its elaboration, which had included several informal discussions and briefings on the margins of the annual session 2017. They commended the integration of gender equality outcomes across all programming areas and the prioritization of the empowerment of adolescent girls. They welcomed the strong commitment to addressing shortfalls in gender mainstreaming through the strengthening of the overall institutional capacity of UNICEF and its in-country partners. They encouraged UNICEF to continue to allocate resources for gender mainstreaming and to prioritize the hiring of regional and in-country gender equality specialists to provide support to field staff in developing transformative programming.

331. A group of delegations welcomed the new focus on menstrual hygiene management as a separate targeted priority, and encouraged UNICEF to continue to play an important role in putting menstrual hygiene management on the global agenda, including within humanitarian contexts. They welcomed the UNICEF intention to accelerate and scale up existing HIV/AIDS interventions for adolescent girls in high-prevalence settings — the only group for which AIDS-related deaths continued to increase. In that and other areas, they urged UNICEF to continue to collaborate closely with other actors, including United Nations organizations.

332. The group welcomed UNICEF focus on the prevention of gender-based violence, especially on risk mitigation, throughout all sectors of its work, and its leadership role in the roll-out of the 2015 Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Guidelines for Integrating Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action. They welcomed the recognition that girls were more than passive recipients of support in humanitarian contexts, and encouraged UNICEF to focus on facilitating the participation and decision-making of women and girls in services and systems that affected their lives.

333. The group would closely follow the implementation of the Gender Action Plan, particularly regarding capacity-strengthening and resource allocation as well as progress on results at the country level. They encouraged all stakeholders and actors to engage with UNICEF and its partners to advance the goals laid out in the plan. They also encouraged UNICEF to align its work in this field with the common performance standards for gender-related work of all United Nations organizations, as expressed in the System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. They urged UNICEF to draw upon and deepen existing coordination mechanisms, wherever possible.

334. Delegations awaited with interest the evaluation of UNICEF effectiveness on gender mainstreaming in 2019, and looked forward to receiving annual reports on the implementation of the Gender Action Plan at the annual sessions of the Executive Board and to engaging with UNICEF in the midterm review process.

D. Structured dialogue on financing the results of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021

335. The Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, introduced the report on the structured dialogue on financing the results of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 (UNICEF/2017/EB/10). The Officer-in-Charge, Public Partnerships Division, and the Director, Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division, delivered a joint presentation.

336. Delegations welcomed the report as well as the structured dialogue. Two groups of delegations highlighted the importance of the structured dialogue in light of the wide range of economic uncertainties, conflicts and crises that had affected the ability of UNICEF to predict and secure support. UNICEF and its partners needed to undertake a strategic discussion on investment in high-quality funding.

337. Delegations underscored that the purpose of the dialogue was to help UNICEF to make funding streams and budget allocations more transparent and financial gaps more visible to enable the organization to secure funding for the priorities of the Strategic Plan and encourage the collection of more flexible resources. The dialogue should begin with an analysis of the Integrated Results and Resource Framework, showing how outputs were financed through different types of funding, and be aimed at effecting a shift towards more flexible resources.

338. A group of delegations expressed support for the UNICEF goal of increasingly funding the priorities of the Strategic Plan through regular resources and softly earmarked funds. Flexible funding would promote sustainability, strengthen results, reduce transaction costs and lead to more-equal burden sharing among donors. With low levels of regular resources and difficult budget situations, it was important to clarify which type of funding was most appropriate for different functions in various contexts. The organization's normative work should be financed primarily through core resources, and improving the ratio of those resources remained a priority. The group encouraged UNICEF to provide more comprehensive information on funding gaps and challenges in future reporting, pinpointing their impact on the implementation of focus areas in the Strategic Plan. They also sought more elaborate risk analysis of unmet financial needs, and urged UNICEF to engage in more-active dialogue, not only with the Board, but also with individual Member States, with the ambition of widening the funding base. They suggested that UNICEF undertake structured financing dialogues with non-State donors as well.

339. The group welcomed UNICEF efforts to improve the accountability of the results achieved through core resources, and commended the improved quality of

the annual report on regular resources. They also welcomed UNICEF efforts to improve the recognition of partners that contributed to regular resources, but encouraged further work, especially at the country level.

340. The group stressed the importance of shared responsibilities, stating that UNICEF efforts would have to be matched by a shift in behaviour by contributors to the organization. Contributing partners needed to remember their commitment to aid effectiveness. Tying resources to selected projects at the country level, or introducing further conditionality on the usage of financial contributions, made it difficult for programme countries to remain in charge of development efforts. They called upon UNICEF to uphold those principles in its dialogue with partners. They also urged UNICEF to strengthen the quality of earmarked funds, and welcomed its aim to increase contributions to softly earmarked thematic funds during the next Strategic Plan period. They commended UNICEF for the results achieved through thematic funding, and appreciated its efforts to give visibility to the impact of such high-quality financing. They noted with satisfaction that reporting and financial information for the funding modality had improved. They encouraged UNICEF to safeguard the thematic funding mechanism as the results structure shifted to the new Strategic Plan.

341. Another group of delegations noted that although the funding balance for 2016 was slightly lower than the one for 2015, the result of $623 million in 2016 was still encouraging and the $95 million increase in regular resources was impressive. They noted that regular resources contributions from Governments had also increased, although not to the same extent as those from the National Committees. Field offices also contributed to the increase, although slightly less than in 2015.

342. The group requested that UNICEF share the situation analysis of its work with the private sector and queried the extent to which the analysis would feed into United Nations reform discussions and how UNICEF would transfer its accumulated knowledge and experience in non-financial partnerships to the other United Nations organizations for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. They looked forward to discussions on those issues and the potential leadership role of UNICEF.

343. Noting the expansion of fundraising activities in field offices, the group expected that field office activities would become increasingly important, since the transition of countries from middle-income to higher-income status would enhance fundraising in those countries. They reiterated their request that National Committees and field offices, both with and without structured financing activities, report separately in future financial reports and include disaggregated figures.

344. Noting the UNICEF request for an additional allocation of $12.2 million in 2017, the group requested more information on how the return on investment had been calculated. They welcomed the increase of allocations for private sector fundraising in the integrated budget, 2018–2021 and encouraged UNICEF to monitor the efficient and effective use of funding and the return on investment.

345. Noting that core resources comprised 12 per cent of the overall income of the Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division, the group sought clarity on whether overall income would continue to remain stable if resources were redistributed from non-core to core.

346. The group commended the aim of UNICEF in the Strategic Plan to set up effective partnerships and engagement with the business sector on child rights, at both the global and country levels, since influencing the behaviour of global and medium-sized companies would have a large impact on the welfare of children. They expected that investment funds would be channelled to address the impact of

business on children and requested that UNICEF set up a monitoring mechanism to determine and steer the effects and sustainability of the results.

347. During the discussion, concerns were expressed about the dramatic reduction in thematic contributions from National Committees, with delegations encouraging UNICEF and the National Committees to work on measures to counter the trend.

E. UNICEF programme cooperation

(a) Approval of country programme documents

348. The Vice-President (Burkina Faso) informed the Executive Board that, in accordance with decision 2014/1, country programme documents (CPDs) would be considered and approved in one session on a no-objection basis. Delegations had been invited to share their comments on 26 draft programme documents, including 24 country programme documents, one area programme document and one multi-country programme document (E/ICEF/2017/P/L.5 to E/ICEF/2017/P/L.30). The draft documents had been posted on the Executive Board website for comment from 19 June to 7 July 2017. The comments were shared with the respective Governments and with UNICEF regional and country offices and taken into account as appropriate in the final versions of the documents. These were made available on the Executive Board website in English six weeks in advance of the session and in the relevant languages four weeks in advance. A costed evaluation plan for each country programme had been posted on the website, along with each country's United Nations Development Assistance Framework. Current procedures called for further discussion only if at least five members of the Board had informed the secretariat in writing that they wished to bring a country programme before the Executive Board for further discussion. The secretariat had received no such requests.

Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States

349. The Regional Director presented the country programme documents for Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine (E/ICEF/2017/P/L.5 to E/ICEF/2017/P/L.9).

350. The representative of Bulgaria noted that his country had played an active role in promoting child rights internationally as a member of the UNICEF Executive Board in the period 2013–2015 and as Vice-President of the Board in 2014 as well as a co-founder and Co-Chair of the Group of Friends for Children and Sustainable Development Goals. Child rights remained high on the agenda for the upcoming Bulgarian presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2018.

351. The representative of the Republic of Moldova stated that since the opening of the country office, the Government had maintained close, productive cooperation with UNICEF to advance its top priority: protecting children. The programme focused specifically on child abandonment and institutionalization, violence against children and inclusive schooling, with particular attention to out-of-school children, including children left behind by migration and those with disabilities. It welcomed UNICEF efforts to strengthen existing mechanisms to monitor data on vulnerable children, and develop child-sensitive programming for the most in-need. The representative spoke about the terminology that should be used in official United Nations documents when referring to the eastern region of her country.

352. The representative of Romania noted that the top priorities of the country programme were the deinstitutionalization process; the minimum package of services for children in vulnerable situations; and violence against children. The

National Authority for the Rights of the Child and Adoption and other relevant authorities were partnering with UNICEF to help raise awareness at all levels of society.

353. The representative of Kyrgyzstan underscored the country's successful history of cooperation with UNICEF. It continued to work to advance health care, child protection, social justice and peace. The programme's child rights-based agenda would help to inform local authorities and policymakers on the empowerment of children and equal access to education and would contribute to the development of an open, just society.

354. The representative of the Russian Federation noted that the country was working with UNICEF to modernize the food system at schools and provide clean water and health services in Kyrgyzstan. The delegation expected the joint projects with UNICEF in Kyrgyzstan to be taken into account in existing programmes being undertaken in the Eurasian community to strengthen the socioeconomic conditions of mothers and families with children. In the context of the Ukraine country programme, the representative of the Russian Federation noted that there should be impartiality towards children and that in resolutions affecting children, there should be no politicization.

East Asia and the Pacific

355. The Regional Director presented the country programme documents for Myanmar and Papua New Guinea (E/ICEF/2017/P/L.10 and E/ICEF/2017/P/L.12) and the multi-country programme for the Pacific Islands (Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) (E/ICEF/2017/P/L.11).

356. The representative of the Solomon Islands was pleased that it would remain a priority country across all programme areas. The multi-country programme, which was aligned with its National Development Strategy, would help to support the Government to address multiple issues, such as newborn mortality; open defecation; out-of-school children; and violence against children.

357. The representative of the Federated States of Micronesia noted that, given its size, remoteness and limited capacity, it was natural that the multi-country programme took a holistic approach to high-quality service delivery with UNICEF and other United Nations organizations, supporting and integrating the United Nations Pacific Strategy 2018–2022, the Framework for Pacific Regionalism and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway into the country's strategic development plan.

358. The representative of Myanmar highlighted that the country programme included six interrelated outcomes: health and nutrition; water, sanitation and hygiene; education; child protection; social policy; and child rights monitoring programme effectiveness, reflecting the national priorities of Myanmar.

359. The representative of Papua New Guinea recognized that UNICEF had an important role to play in the country with respect to the Sustainable Development Goals and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The country remained committed to working with UNICEF and the United Nations system as a whole and with its other multilateral and bilateral development partners.

360. The representative of Fiji noted that the multi-country programme would contribute directly to the country's development agenda and reflected discussions held among the Government, UNICEF and other United Nations and development partners. That emergency preparedness and response and disaster risk reduction

were mainstreamed across the six components of programme was especially important, given the high exposure of Pacific countries to climate change and natural disasters.

Eastern and Southern Africa

361. The Regional Director presented the country programme document for Somalia (E/ICEF/2017/P/L.13).

362. The representative of Somalia expressed support for the country programme and commended UNICEF for its brave presence on the ground in Somalia. He was pleased that the country programme was built on the Somalia National Development Plan and the Sustainable Development Goals. He expressed hope that the recent surge in optimism would translate into concrete achievements, especially in the security and economic sectors.

Latin America and Caribbean

363. The Regional Director presented the country programme documents for Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Chile, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic (E/ICEF/2017/P/L.14 to E/ICEF/2017/P/L.17).

364. The representative of the Dominican Republic stressed the importance of the global data revolution and called upon UNICEF to continue to assist the country to improve its national statistical system, and to provide technical assistance for indicators on children and adolescents.

365. The representative of Chile highlighted that cooperation with UNICEF and other United Nations organizations had allowed Chile to identify, prioritize and address outstanding challenges in such strategic areas as equality, social inclusion, child protection and justice.

366. The representative of Costa Rica recognized the important contribution of UNICEF in building the capacity of national institutions. He highlighted that the programme was drafted in close cooperation with the Government and in alignment with government priorities, reflecting the commitment to the 2030 Agenda.

367. The representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia said that the country programme would ensure that the country's children and adolescents could fulfil their potential. The programme would also help to strengthen governmental policies to reduce poverty disparities.

Middle East and North Africa

368. The Regional Director presented the country programme documents for Djibouti, Egypt and the Sudan and the area programme document for Palestinian children and women in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the State of Palestine (E/ICEF/2017/P/L.18 to E/ICEF/2017/P/L.21).

369. The representative of Djibouti welcomed the UNICEF achievements for the period 2013–2017 and the new country programme, which included interventions aimed at protecting children. While noting the inherent challenges of such projects, the delegation appealed to UNICEF to establish care centres in Djibouti for children with special needs and for early childhood overall and, to that end, to broaden its resource base and donor partnerships.

370. The representative of the Sudan underscored the vital support of UNICEF on issues related to childhood and pointed to the need for UNICEF support in the areas of vaccination and awareness-raising for health-care issues. He added that his country valued the role of UNICEF in caring for former child soldiers, including

providing them with psychological support after their reintegration. He drew attention to UNICEF cooperation with the Secretary-General in the concluding and approving of a national plan to combat the recruitment of children into conflict.

371. The representative of Egypt highlighted that, in line with the national 2030 Vision, refugee children were completely integrated into society with the same rights and access to the same services as Egyptian citizens. Egypt was working closely with UNICEF and the World Bank to end poverty and reach the most vulnerable children and their families.

372. The representative of the State of Palestine commended UNICEF for working with local authorities on the ground to address the needs of Palestinian children, especially in Gaza, by promoting and implementing programmes that improved their well-being, despite the challenges and obstacles posed by occupation. Underlining UNICEF work in monitoring and reporting on grave violations and advocating for the improved protection of children in military detention, the delegation appealed to UNICEF to issue a follow-up to the observations and recommendations presented in its 2013 report.

373. The representative of Israel cautioned against politicizing the Executive Board and to focus on the well-being of children.

South Asia

374. The Regional Director presented the country programme documents for India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka (E/ICEF/2017/P/L.22 to E/ICEF/2017/P/L.25).

375. The representative of Pakistan, noting her country's longstanding partnership with UNICEF, highlighted that the country programme was guided by the national Vision 2025, which was focused on ending poverty and reducing inequality, especially for children. Pakistan was pursuing policies to integrate the poor into society's mainstream, with a special focus on child development as well as improved access to education, health care and economic opportunities.

376. The representative of Nepal commended UNICEF for its work in humanitarian settings, especially in countries, such as its own, that were especially prone to natural disasters. They expressed appreciation for the UNICEF contributions towards the protection of children and their rights in crisis situations. The delegation welcomed the country programme, which, among other initiatives, was aimed at helping it to orient its policies to invest in its youth.

West and Central Africa

377. The Regional Director presented the country programme documents for Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Gabon, Guinea and Nigeria (E/ICEF/2017/P/L.26 to E/ICEF/2017/P/L.30).

378. The representative of Nigeria drew attention to the work of UNICEF in addressing the health and development of children in the country, especially malnutrition and mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS. The Government had prioritized the support of children returning to school and intended to further commit to the mutually reinforcing objectives of the country programme.

379. The representative of Burkina Faso pointed to the country's strong cooperation with UNICEF in addressing access for children, youth and vulnerable women, especially in rural areas, to better health care; nutrition; education; hygiene; water and sanitation services; and social protection. It called for assistance for children in emergency situations, including through building social resilience.

380. The representative of the Central African Republic noted that the country programme prioritized the most vulnerable, with a focus on child survival and development; primary education; gender equality; child protection; water and sanitation; and public health. Cooperation in those areas would lay the foundation for peacebuilding, especially since exclusion had always underlain the social and political disturbances that had long destabilized the country.

381. The representative of Guinea thanked UNICEF and other partners for their support to the Government and people of Guinea before and after the recent Ebola crisis. The delegation welcomed the inclusive approach of UNICEF in preparing and validating the new country programme, which focused on strengthening the health-care system and the immunization programme.

382. The representative of Gabon, noting the country's longstanding partnership with UNICEF, said that the national road map for development had given Gabon the framework to implement a legal arsenal to protect the rights of the child, with the establishment of obligatory education and severe penalties for child marriage and child labour, while raising social awareness around child exploitation and strengthening national healthcare access and coverage.

383. The Executive Board adopted decision 2017/11 (see annex I).

(b) Extensions of ongoing country programmes

384. The Vice-President (Burkina Faso) noted that, in accordance with Executive Board decision 2009/11, the Executive Board had been informed of the two-month extension of the country programme for Jordan; the six-month extension of the country programme for South Sudan; and the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Lesotho, Liberia, Nicaragua, the Syrian Arab Republic and Zambia; and the first one-year extension of the Gulf Area subregional programme (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) approved by the Executive Director. The Executive Board was requested to approve the two-month extensions of the country programmes for Cabo Verde, Ghana and Mauritania, following one-year extensions; the one-year extension of the country programme for Libya, following three one-year extensions; the 15-month extension of the country programme for South Africa; and the two-year extension of the country programme for Yemen. Those proposals were presented in table 2 of document E/ICEF/2017/P/L.31.

385. The Executive Board adopted decision 2017/12 (see annex I).

F. Evaluation reports and management responses

Evaluation of UNICEF's response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, 2014–2015, and management response

386. Following opening remarks by the Vice-President (Saudi Arabia), the Officer-in-Charge, Evaluation Office, presented the report, followed by the Director, Programme Division, who presented the management response.

387. Some delegations welcomed the evaluation and the management response, but noted that they had hoped that the report would come at an earlier stage. They commended the efforts of UNICEF during the Ebola outbreak, especially its flexibility, which had allowed it to adapt strategies and interventions in response to the evolving epidemic. They found the evaluation to be of good quality, capturing the strengths and weaknesses of the UNICEF response. The evaluation highlighted

the shortfalls of UNICEF in efficiency while pointing to lessons that could be considered for future crises. The delegations highlighted five main observations.

388. First, UNICEF shared responsibility, together with other partners, for the delayed response, and thus had missed the opportunity to contain the outbreak when the virus was identified. The delegations sought clarity on actions UNICEF would take in the future to ensure that it improved its ability to recognize early signs of such outbreaks, mobilize resources in a timely fashion and speed up financial and administrative procedures.

389. Second, the evaluation showed that, after initial failure with one-way communication with communities, UNICEF had switched its strategy to community engagement and two-way communication. Results indicated that real-time monitoring, information sharing and communication (through information and communications technology and community engagement) had played an important role in stopping the outbreak. The delegations encouraged UNICEF to use the evaluation findings to change the ways in which it worked around social mobilization and community engagement.

390. Third, all attention had been given to controlling and ending the outbreak and little to ensuring that essential health services were provided. Most likely, women and children with health conditions other than Ebola died owing to the collapse of the health system. A resilient health system would be able not only to cope with emergencies but also to maintain normal health services. They encouraged UNICEF to change its approach to working in emergencies on the basis of those lessons.

391. Fourth, the delegations noted with concern that UNICEF had not paid sufficient attention to child protection during the outbreak. Children were put at risk and became extremely vulnerable when, for example, they were put in quarantine or when they lost their parents. They sought detailed analysis from UNICEF on why that had happened and how it would prevent such an oversight in the future.

392. Fifth, noting that some partners and Governments questioned the validity of community care centres, but that the management response suggested that UNICEF was taking the concept forward, the delegations sought clarity on how UNICEF would incorporate the evaluation's findings on that issue in future work.

393. A group of delegations was pleased to see that UNICEF was identifying lessons learned. They welcomed the management response and the planned actions to address shortcomings identified in the evaluation, including through direct assistance, advocacy, capacity-building and systems strengthening. They noted that one aspect missing from the evaluation was clear analysis of how gender considerations had been integrated into the UNICEF response. They stressed that the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action and the UNICEF framework, principles and accountability included gender equality considerations. They encouraged UNICEF to better integrate those considerations into future evaluations, and welcomed more evaluations on UNICEF humanitarian action.

United Nations Evaluation Group professional peer review of the evaluation function of UNICEF: Final report, and management response

394. The Deputy Executive Director, Management, took the floor.

395. A group of delegations welcomed the peer review, which provided a useful overview of UNICEF good practices, as well as areas for improvement. They commended the Evaluation Office for improving the quality of evaluations and compliance with requirements for management responses, as well as the Office's ongoing support to international evaluation networks.

396. They noted, however, that the overall assessment rated the UNICEF evaluation function as "short of being satisfactory" or "close to satisfactory" against the three core principles of independence, credibility and utility, and emphasized the need to strengthen effectiveness and efficiency. The report set out a number of recommendations for strengthening the planning, coordination and harmonization of evaluation activities across the organization as well as for improving the scope, timeliness and quality of evaluations.

397. The delegations welcomed the response of management and its commitment to strengthening the UNICEF evaluation function, including by updating its evaluation policy. They encouraged UNICEF to engage in broad discussions with Member States and looked forward to considering the draft policy at an upcoming Executive Board session.

398. They welcomed the UNICEF commitment to allocating to evaluation a minimum of 1 per cent of total programme expenditure by 2018, according to the Integrated Results and Resources Framework, 2018–2021. Noting, however, that UNICEF disagreed partially with the recommendation to target 1 per cent at the regional level, they requested more information on the rationale for management's response to recommendation 3.1 and the related recommendation 4.4 on country and multi-country evaluation advisers.

399. The delegations underscored that UNICEF had to set aside sufficient financial, administrative and human resources to allow for the full implementation of evaluation recommendations, including those from the peer review. They asked that UNICEF closely monitor whether the funds provided were sufficient for that purpose. Recalling decision 2017/9, they reiterated their request for UNICEF to present plans towards meeting the 1 per cent target and to provide annual updates on its progress.

400. In line with the previous Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network review, they encouraged UNICEF to improve evaluation quality and coverage and to systematically use evaluation evidence in decision-making and knowledge management and exchange across country and regional offices.

401. The delegations noted that the new evaluation policy would offer an opportunity to provide guidance on the integration of cross-cutting issues in evaluations and the formulation of recommendations as well as establish guidelines for the timely and systematic evaluation coverage of humanitarian assistance.

402. Recalling decision 2017/9, they requested the further harmonization of evaluation policies across the funds and programmes, drawing upon recently approved policies for reference, as well as increased collaboration and joint evaluation work. Recognizing the importance of UNICEF evaluations for both the continuous improvement of its work and the oversight function of the Board, they requested that all future evaluation items be presented to the Board for decision.

403. The delegations underlined their support for UNICEF efforts to improve the independence, credibility and utility of its evaluation function, and expressed that they looked forward to receiving updates on progress made in implementing the peer review recommendations.

404. The Executive Board adopted decision 2017/17 (see annex I).

G. UNICEF integrated budget, 2018–2021

405. The Deputy Executive Director, Management, introduced the UNICEF integrated budget, 2018–2021 and its annex (E/ICEF/2017/AB/L.4 and Add.1),

followed by a presentation by the Comptroller and Director, Division of Financial and Administrative Management.

406. A group of delegations stressed the importance of a transparent, comprehensive budget for results-based management, and welcomed the inclusion of private resource mobilization in the integrated budget. They also commended UNICEF for strengthening coordination through the Office of Emergency Programmes.

407. While recognizing the draft budget's level of detail, the group stated that they had expected more extensive, easily accessible information, with a greater level of detail in the resource plan, in particular, a breakdown of the management category and more systematic information on saving as a result of cooperation with other United Nations organizations.

408. Recalling decision 2017/10, they asked UNICEF to include separate budget lines for the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations and the Evaluation Office in the first update of the integrated budget. They welcomed the budgeted increase in funds for corporate oversight and assurance, but requested more information on how UNICEF would distribute the increase between personnel and operating costs. They also sought further detail on the distribution between internal auditing and investigations.

409. The group supported the focus on research and evidence-generation as key elements for sound programming, advocacy and the leveraging of partnerships. They stressed that research needed to be independent. Noting that the funding for research and evidence-generation was unclear, they suggested that UNICEF include such information in the resource plan.

410. The group welcomed the proposed increase in investments to achieve programme goals during the period 2018–2021. Noting the UNICEF plan to allocate a constant percentage of core resources to the various Goal Areas, they requested more information on its rationale.

411. Noting the continued high level of non-staff contracts, due in part to funding structure and unpredictable income, they requested that UNICEF present more information on the reasons behind the extensive use of consultants. They strongly agreed with the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions that the midterm review provided an important opportunity to assess performance against the integrated budget and to consider further developments. They suggested that such a review take into account the outcome of intergovernmental processes around the Secretary-General's reform recommendations.

412. The Executive Board adopted decision 2017/14 (see annex I).

H. Private Fundraising and Partnerships: financial report for the year ended 31 December 2016

413. The Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, introduced the report (E/ICEF/2017/AB/L.6), which was followed by a presentation by the Director, Private Fundraising and Partnerships.

414. The Standing Group of National Committees stressed that citizens worldwide contributed to enabling the work of UNICEF, providing half of its regular resources. National Committees were also working with corporations. A key new partnership was with LEGO; the National Committee in Denmark had played a key role in establishing contact and developing the conditions for a successful partnership. Partnerships with foundations were also important, such as that with The Rotary

Foundation. Optimal coordination among National Committees worked to create opportunities that deepened ties with donors and helped to co-create policies and strategies that enabled everyone to do more for children. The representative of the Standing Group highlighted that, in close collaboration with Governments, National Committees had helped UNICEF to develop a list of meaningful indicators that were endorsed almost in their entirety by the United Nations.

415. Other delegations took the floor to express support for the common statement on private fundraising and partnerships, delivered under item 7 on the structured dialogue. It was also stressed that funds from private resource mobilization comprised a large and growing share of UNICEF revenue. Similarly, it was appreciated that almost half of the private funds raised in 2016 were regular resources, the largest ever. Those funds gave UNICEF much-needed flexibility. The inclusion of funds from private resource mobilization in the integrated budget was welcomed, and UNICEF was encouraged to include private partners in structured financing dialogues.

416. The Executive Board adopted decision 2017/16 (see annex I).

I. Report of the joint field visit to Nepal by members of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP, from 17 to 21 April 2017

417. The report (DP/FPA/OPS-ICEF-UNW-WFP/2017/CRP.1) was introduced by the Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations and President of the Executive Board, H.E. Mr. Walton Alfonso Webson. The objective of the visit was to help Board members to understand the ways in which the United Nations organizations contributed to achieving national development plans and goals. It was also aimed at demonstrating the role and effectiveness of the resident coordinator system, ensuring that the coordination met the established objectives and promoted delivering as one.

418. The delegation exchanged views with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs as well as with the electoral office on the new electoral work that Nepal had undertaken. The delegation observed disaster-recovery efforts following the 2015 earthquake, resilience building, including economic resilience and food security, and activities regarding education, youth and gender. The United Nations system was assisting Nepal with the emergency response but, given the damage to basic infrastructure, the recovery phase would be long.

419. The delegation, noting that longstanding internal conflicts in Nepal were due in large part to inequity and a sense of exclusion felt by many groups, encouraged the United Nations system to work with the Government to envision how best to address it. They also encouraged the country team to remain engaged with national authorities in responding to the political system change, with the funds and programmes demonstrating flexibility in adapting programmes and projects to the evolving context, while striking a balance between efficient service delivery and continued capacity-building.

J. Other matters

Provisional list of agenda items for the first regular session of 2018

420. The Secretary introduced the list to the Executive Board for information.

K. Adoption of draft decisions

421. The Executive Board adopted decisions 2017/11 through 2017/17 (see annex I).

L. Closing statements by the Executive Director of UNICEF and the President of the Executive Board

422. The Executive Director thanked the Executive Board for its close cooperation in developing and adopting the decisions, especially regarding the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and the integrated budget, 2018–2021 that would guide the work of UNICEF and its partners around the world. The plan was ambitious, as was the organization. He expressed special thanks to the President of the Board for his leadership, vision, personal inspiration and practical drive throughout the year to move the work of the Board forward.

423. The President of the Executive Board, underscoring the challenges and achievements in the fight for children throughout the world in 2017, drew attention to the importance of the Board's adoption of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021. The plan charted a course towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, set out measurable results and defined the strategies and elements of the work to be accomplished over the following four years.

424. He commended UNICEF for its close engagement with Board members and other partners, including the private sector and civil society. He also welcomed the high level of collaboration between UNICEF and other United Nations development system organizations, which had helped the Board to gain a deeper understanding of how UNICEF could leverage its strengths and partnerships. He welcomed the organization's drive to seek out new opportunities for engagement, to learn from its experiences and to continue to evolve.

Annex I

Decisions adopted by the Executive Board in 2017

First regular session

2017/1
Country programme documents

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* that the country programme documents, including aggregate indicative budgets, for Botswana (E/ICEF/2017/P/L.1) and Haiti (E/ICEF/2017/P/L.2) were made available to Member States for their comments and input from 14 November to 2 December 2016, in accordance with Executive Board decision 2014/1 on modifications to procedures for consideration and approval of country programme documentation;

2. *Approves* on a no-objection basis, and in accordance with decision 2014/1, the country programme documents, including aggregate indicative budgets, for Botswana (E/ICEF/2017/P/L.1) and Haiti (E/ICEF/2017/P/L.2).

First regular session
7 February 2017

2017/2
Private Fundraising and Partnerships: 2017 workplan and proposed budget

A. Private Fundraising and Partnerships budgeted expenses for the 2017 fiscal year (special purpose)

The Executive Board

1. *Approves* for the fiscal year 2017 (1 January to 31 December) budgeted special purpose expenses of $161.3 million, as detailed in the table below.

(Millions of United States dollars)

Investment fund costs funded by special purpose regular resources	70.0
Other private sector fundraising costs funded by special purpose regular resources	46.0
Total private sector fundraising and partnerships costs funded by special purpose regular resources	**116.0**
Private sector fundraising and partnerships costs funded by special purpose other resources	**45.3**
Total special purpose expenses	**161.3**

2. *Authorizes* UNICEF

(a) To incur expenses, as summarized in column II of table 2 of document E/ICEF/2017/AB/L.1, and to decrease or increase expenses, up to the levels indicated in columns I and III of the same table, should the apparent revenue from fundraising decrease or increase to the levels indicated in columns I and III;

(b) To redeploy resources between the various regular resources budget lines (as detailed in paragraph 1), up to a maximum of 10 per cent of the amounts approved;

(c) To spend an additional amount between Executive Board sessions, when necessary, up to the amount caused by currency fluctuations, to implement the 2017 approved workplan.

B. Budgeted revenue for the year 2017

The Executive Board

1. *Notes* that, for the period 1 January to 31 December 2017, Private Fundraising and Partnerships revenue is budgeted at $1.49 billion, as shown in column II of table 2 in document E/ICEF/2017/AB/L.1.

C. Policy issues

The Executive Board

1. *Approves* the allocation of investment funds amounting to $70 million for 2017;

2. *Approves* an interim one-month allocation for January 2018 of $11.6 million (or 10 per cent of the special purpose regular resources allocation of $116 million), to be absorbed in the annual Private Fundraising and Partnerships budget for 2018.

First regular session
8 February 2017

2017/3
Updated road map to and outline of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021

The Executive Board

1. *Welcomes* the preparatory work done and the various informal meetings with the Executive Board on the process of elaboration of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021;

2. *Requests* UNICEF to engage constructively with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) to ensure a coherent approach of the four strategic plans (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN-Women);

3. *Also requests* UNICEF, in line with General Assembly resolution 71/243 of 21 December 2016 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, to elaborate in its strategic plan on how it plans to engage in coherent and integrated support, as called for in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in this regard, further requests UNICEF to work collaboratively with UNFPA, UNDP and UN-Women on the development of a specific chapter in its strategic plan outlining a common approach in supporting Member States towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in accordance with each entity's mandate;

4. *Encourages* UNICEF to collaborate with UNFPA, UNDP and UN-Women to continue to harmonize their approaches to results reporting on their

strategic plans, which, inter alia, will help to capture their contributions to collective outcomes;

5. *Requests* UNICEF to provide all relevant documents at least 10 days prior to any consultation.

First regular session
8 February 2017

2017/4
UNICEF financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2015 and report of the Board of Auditors

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Board of Auditors for the financial period that ended on 31 December 2015 (A/71/5/Add.3), as well as recommendations from prior years;

2. *Notes* the 2015 unqualified audit opinions issued by the United Nations Board of Auditors for UNICEF;

3. *Encourages* UNICEF to prioritize the implementation of the eight main audit recommendations identified by the Board of Auditors for the year ended 31 December 2015;

4. *Also encourages* UNICEF to continue to strengthen risk management and the implementation of the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers, and to improve the timeliness of monitoring and evaluation, as identified by the Board of Auditors;

5. *Further encourages* UNICEF to fully address the 14 outstanding recommendations from the 2014 report of the Board of Auditors.

First regular session
8 February 2017

Annual session

2017/5
Country programme documents

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* that the country programme document, including aggregate indicative budget, for Cameroon (E/ICEF/2017/P/L.3) was made available to Member States for their comments and input from 20 March to 7 April 2017, in accordance with Executive Board decision 2014/1 on modifications to procedures for consideration and approval of country programme documentation;

2. *Approves* on a no-objection basis, and in accordance with decision 2014/1, the country programme document, including aggregate indicative budget, for Cameroon (E/ICEF/2017/P/L.3).

Annual session
13 June 2017

2017/7
Annual report for 2016 of the Executive Director of UNICEF

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the annual report of the Executive Director of UNICEF: performance and results for 2016, including a report on the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and the Integrated Results and Resources Framework of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 (E/ICEF/2017/6 and Add.1);

2. *Also takes note* of the UNICEF report on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit (E/ICEF/2017/8);

3. *Requests* UNICEF to incorporate the lessons learned from the relevant analyses of performance under the Strategic Plan, 2014–2017, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF): Review of development effectiveness, 2012–2015 and management response in the formulation of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, and urges UNICEF to strengthen outputs and outcome and impact indicators in consultation with programme implementing units in the organization;

4. *Recalls* decision 2013/5 in which the Executive Board requested UNICEF to recommend adjustments to the approved cost-recovery rates, as required, to be presented at the annual session 2016 of the Executive Board, notes that this process has been delayed and requests UNICEF, together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), to continue the consultations with Member States with regard to the cost-recovery policy and to present evidence-based proposals for harmonized cost-recovery policies of UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Women and UNICEF, with adjustments if required, for consideration by the respective Executive Boards no later than their annual sessions in 2018;

5. *Emphasizes* the need for UNICEF to continue to improve transparency in the use of resources to achieve programme results and to enhance organizational effectiveness and efficiency, and requests UNICEF to present in its future financial planning and reports a higher level of detail on the way that regular (core) resources are attributed and used, inter alia, with regard to financial breakdowns across budget areas, including staff costs;

6. *Decides* to transmit the above-mentioned reports to the Economic and Social Council, along with a summary of the comments and guidance of the Executive Board.

Annual session
15 June 2017

2017/8
UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, draft for review

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, draft for review, and encourages the timely elaboration and consideration of all its components chapters and related documents, such as the integrated budget, 2018–2021, results framework, theory of change, Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021 and cost-recovery policies, in conjunction with the Strategic Plan, in line with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

2. *Requests* UNICEF to work closely with the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in line with the QCPR on identifying common measurable indicators for shared areas of

collaborative advantage, which are spelled out in the Strategic Plan, including its common chapter;

3. *Also requests* UNICEF to present, in the next version of the draft: (a) a further elaboration of the operationalization of the concept of "leaving no one behind", within its mandate and taking into account its comparative advantages, in particular with regard to the building, development and strengthening of national capacities as defined in the QCPR, in line with national development, policies, plans, priorities and needs; (b) a further clarification of the concerted efforts to mainstream gender equality and address disability and to strengthen the relevant institutional and country capacities in order to ensure efficient and effective results; (c) a concrete narrative on the approach of UNICEF to humanitarian assistance, including its efforts to increase coherence and complementarity with its development work, in relevant contexts, reflecting lessons learned from the Strategic Plan, 2014–2017, and to reflect this narrative in the results framework and in the theory of change; and (d) a clearer theory of change, from outputs to outcomes, reflecting common United Nations Development Group guidelines and terminology on results-based management;

4. *Further requests* UNICEF to incorporate relevant lessons learned from the integrated budget, 2014–2017, inter alia, with regard to results-based budgeting, in the preparation of the integrated budget, 2018–2021;

5. *Requests* that UNICEF continue to provide in a timely manner the draft integrated budget for consideration by Member States, including all relevant funding sources.

Annual session
15 June 2017

2017/9
Evaluation reports, and management perspective and response

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the annual report for 2016 on the evaluation function in UNICEF (E/ICEF/2017/11);

2. *Encourages* UNICEF to continue its ongoing internal capacity-building activities addressing gaps in the evaluation coverage of humanitarian assistance, in accordance with its mandate, and to take further steps to address shortcomings related to evaluation coverage of cross-cutting priorities, including gender equality, and also to strengthen impact-level evaluations;

3. *Welcomes* the focus of UNICEF on meeting the target to spend 1 per cent of resources allocated to evaluation, but is concerned that this goal was not met in 2015 or 2016, and therefore requests UNICEF to present plans towards meeting it;

4. *Requests* that updates on these issues be provided at the annual session of the UNICEF Executive Board in 2018;

5. *Takes note* of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF): Review of development effectiveness, 2012–2015, looks forward to the implementation of the actions described in the management response and requests an update on the implementation of the recommendations of the review at the annual session of the UNICEF Executive Board in 2018;

6. *Requests* UNICEF to further advance collaboration and joint evaluation work with other United Nations entities, especially United Nations funds and programmes.

Annual session
14 June 2017

2017/10
Internal Audit and Investigations

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigations 2016 annual report to the Executive Board (E/ICEF/2017/AB/L.2) and, in particular, the overall opinion on the adequacy of the organization's framework of governance, risk management and control, and asks the Office to provide further supporting analysis for such opinions in future annual reports;

2. *Welcomes* the reflection the Office has been giving to its strategic direction and its intention to enhance its focus on key risks and issues, including fraud-risk management;

3. *Looks forward* to the implementation of the actions described in the management response and requests an update on the implementation of the recommendations at the annual session of the UNICEF Executive Board in 2018;

4. *Takes note* of the recommendations made to management by the Audit Advisory Committee, urges the Executive Director to ensure that UNICEF managers have a clear understanding of the Committee's role and appreciates management's commitment to consider all recommendations made by the Committee;

5. *Expresses concern* about areas of risk consistently identified in the audit reports, namely, results-based management, governance and accountability and supply and logistics, and urges management to prioritize the implementation of actions that address these recurring identified risks;

6. *Welcomes* the steady decline of actions outstanding for more than 18 months;

7. *Also welcomes* the intention of UNICEF to finalize and implement an enhanced anti-fraud strategy as part of its response to the recommendations of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations system on fraud prevention, detection and response, and requests that UNICEF report to the Executive Board on its implementation;

8. *Notes with appreciation* the implementation rate of the audit recommendations of 99.6 per cent as of December 2016;

9. *Notes with concern* the low level of defrauded funds reported as recovered and urges management to do all it can to ensure the timely recovery of any potential loss in investigated cases, and to strengthen the control of third parties;

10. *Requests* management to provide regular updates on the recovery of assets, including recovery trends, to the Executive Board at its annual session;

11. *Also requests* UNICEF to take firm action to reduce the number of internal audits with non-satisfactory ratings;

12. *Welcomes* the use by UNICEF of the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers Framework and encourages its use in all relevant contexts;

13. *Requests* UNICEF to provide information on investigations performed by the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations as well as information on actions taken as a result of such investigations, in the annual report of the Office, in line with relevant and existing disclosure policies and guidelines of UNICEF;

14. *Also requests* UNICEF to continue to allocate sufficient resources for the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations to ensure a satisfactory number of internal audits and investigations each year and requests that a separate budget item for the Office be included in future budgets.

Annual session
15 June 2017

Second regular session

2017/11
Country programme documents

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* that the country programme documents for Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chile, Costa Rica, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Gabon, Guinea, India, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Somalia, Sri Lanka, the Sudan and Ukraine, the multi-country programme document for the Pacific Islands (Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) and the area programme document for Palestinian children and women in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the State of Palestine (E/ICEF/2017/P/L.5-E/ICEF/2017/P/L.30), including aggregate indicative budgets, were made available to Member States for their comments and input from 19 June to 7 July 2017, in accordance with Executive Board decision 2014/1 on modifications to procedures for consideration and approval of country programme documentation;

2. *Approves* on a no-objection basis, and in accordance with decision 2014/1, the country programme documents for Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chile, Costa Rica, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Gabon, Guinea, India, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Somalia, Sri Lanka, the Sudan and Ukraine, the multi-country programme document for the Pacific Islands (Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) and the area programme document for Palestinian children and women in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the State of Palestine (E/ICEF/2017/P/L.5-E/ICEF/2017/P/L.30), including aggregate indicative budgets.

Second regular session
12 September 2017

2017/12
Extensions of ongoing country programmes

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the two-month extension of the country programme for Jordan; the six-month extension of the country programme for South Sudan; the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for the Democratic Republic of

the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Lesotho, Liberia, Nicaragua, the Syrian Arab Republic and Zambia; and the first one-year extension of the Gulf Area subregional programme (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates), which were approved by the Executive Director and are presented in table 1 of E/ICEF/2017/P/L.31;

2. *Approves* the two-month extensions of the country programmes for Cabo Verde, Ghana and Mauritania, following one-year extensions; the one-year extension of the country programme for Libya, following three one-year extensions; the 15-month extension of the country programme for South Africa; and the two-year extension of the country programme for Yemen, following two one-year extensions, as presented in table 2 of E/ICEF/2017/P/L.31.

Second regular session
15 September 2017

2017/13
UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021

The Executive Board

1. *Endorses* the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 as contained in document E/ICEF/2017/17/Rev.1 and requests UNICEF to implement the Strategic Plan in accordance with the principles of national ownership and priorities, guided by international human right treaties and instruments and humanitarian principles for humanitarian assistance;

2. *Takes note* of the common chapter to the strategic plans of UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women); requests UNICEF, if changes are made to the common chapter, to align it with UNDP, UNFPA and UN-Women after endorsement by their respective Executive Boards and to resubmit it for endorsement by the UNICEF Executive Board; and encourages UNICEF to provide details on the implementation of the common chapter in its annual reporting and, when applicable and as appropriate, at the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/United Nations Office for Project Services, UNICEF, UN-Women and the World Food Programme.

Second regular session
15 September 2017

2017/14
UNICEF integrated budget, 2018–2021

The Executive Board

1. *Welcomes* the UNICEF integrated budget, 2018–2021 in response to its request in its decision 2009/20 to present a single, integrated budget that includes all UNICEF budgetary categories, with an improved results focus and enhanced linkages with the strategic plan results and harmonized in methodology and presentation, including on cost classification, attribution and recovery, with the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women);

2. *Approves* the integrated resource plan as the financial framework for the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, based on projections of resources available, utilization and working capital required for liquidity;

3. *Requests* UNICEF to continue its strong focus on targeting resources towards the goals of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, particularly at the field level and on minimizing institutional costs;

4. *Approves*, for the Global and Regional Programme, a budget from regular resources of $220.0 million, subject to the availability of resources, and other resources of $810.2 million, subject to the receipt of contributions to other resources, for the period 2018–2021;

5. *Also approves* an extension of Executive Board decision 2016/9 authorizing the Executive Director to establish 10 additional director-level positions, to be funded from within the approved institutional budget for the period 2018–2021;

6. *Further approves* an appropriation for the institutional budget for the period 2018–2021 of $2,455.5 million to cover the costs of development effectiveness, United Nations development coordination, management activities and, within special purpose activities, capital investments, and notes that the projected funding for the appropriation is $1,095.2 million from regular resources and $1,195.0 million from cost recovery from other resources;

7. *Notes*, in addition to the appropriation of $2,290.2 million, the projected funding for the institutional budget of $165.3 million from other resources, subject to the receipt of contributions to other resources;

8. *Also notes*, within special purpose activities, the projected utilization of resources for:

(a) The amounts required in accordance with the UNICEF Financial Regulations and Rules to defray the costs of UNICEF administration of special accounts on behalf of others, including procurement services;

(b) Private sector fundraising, for which budgets will be submitted for consideration and approval on an annual basis by the Executive Board at its first regular session;

9. *Requests* the Executive Director to:

(a) Provide actual financial information in the format of the integrated resource plan and assess performance against the integrated budget in his annual report to the Executive Board;

(b) Recall Executive Board decision 2016/8 and ensure continued focus on improving transparency in the use of resources to achieve programme results and enhance organizational effectiveness and efficiency;

(c) Provide regular updates on the impact and efficiency of spending, including against the Goal Areas and cross-cutting themes of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021;

(d) Continue to ensure sufficient resources for effective evaluation and audit functions, recalling Executive Board decisions 2017/9 and 2017/10, respectively; and to include in its first revision of the integrated budget a separate budget item for the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations, as decided by the Board in its decision 2017/10, paragraph 14;

(e) Submit to the Executive Board, for annual approval, an updated integrated resource plan at its second regular session, following review of the financial projections upon which it is based;

(f) Submit to the Executive Board information on the actual implementation and results of the revised cost-recovery methodology, together with any related recommendations, at its annual session in 2018;

(g) Take into account the recommendations provided in the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions with regard to the implementation of the integrated budget, 2018–2021 and the preparation of the midterm review;

10. *Takes note* of the presentation by UNICEF on the structured dialogue on financing the results of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, and recalls its decision 2016/13 on the structured dialogue on financing;

11. *Requests* UNICEF to improve future structured dialogues on financing and, in that regard, requests UNICEF to present a proposal to the Executive Board no later than the second regular session of 2018 on how it plans to use the structured dialogue on financing as a tool to improve the quality and transparency of funding and to better match resources to the outcomes of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021;

12. *Encourages* UNICEF, in collaboration with UNDP, UNFPA and UN-Women, to find effective and practicable ways to harmonize administrative and financial systems in order to facilitate joint programming and implementation, and to present information on progress made in this regard to the Executive Board.

Second regular session
15 September 2017

2017/15
Proposed programme of work for the Executive Board sessions in 2018

The Executive Board

Adopts the programme of work for the Executive Board sessions in 2018 as a flexible framework subject to revisions as appropriate in the course of the year.

Joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP (date to be confirmed)

First regular session *6-9 February 2018*	*Annual session* *11-14 June 2018*	*Second regular session* *12-14 September 2018*
Organizational and procedural matters	**Organizational and procedural matters**	**Organizational and procedural matters**
Election of the President and Vice Presidents of the Executive Board (*D*) (9 January 2018)[1]		Proposed programme of work for the Executive Board sessions in 2019 (*D*)
Programme and policy matters	**Programme and policy matters**	**Programme and policy matters**
UNICEF programme cooperation: Country programme documents (*D*)	Annual report of the Executive Director of UNICEF (*D*)	UNICEF programme cooperation: Country programme documents (*D*)
Extensions of ongoing country programmes (*D*)	UNICEF report on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit[2] (*I*)	Extensions of ongoing country programmes (*D*)

[1] This date is tentative
[2] The report is considered under the agenda item "Annual report of the Executive Director of UNICEF"

First regular session *6-9 February 2018*	*Annual session* *11-14 June 2018*	*Second regular session* *12-14 September 2018*
Oral report on UNICEF follow-up to recommendations and decisions of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Programme Coordinating Board meetings (*I*)	Annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action (*D*)	Structured dialogue on financing the results of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 (*I*)
Oral update on UNICEF humanitarian action (*I*)	Annual report on the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021 (*I*)	Oral update on UNICEF humanitarian action (*I*)
	UNICEF programme cooperation:	
	Country programme documents (*D*)	
	Extensions of ongoing country programmes (*D*)	
Evaluation, audit and oversight matters	**Evaluation, audit and oversight matters**	**Evaluation, audit and oversight matters**
Plan for global thematic evaluations, 2018–2019 (*D*)	Annual report for 2017 on the evaluation function in UNICEF (*D*), and management perspective	Evaluation reports and management responses (*I*)
Road map to a revision of the evaluation policy of UNICEF (*I*)	Evaluation reports and management responses (*D*)	
Evaluation reports and management responses (*D*)	Revised evaluation policy of UNICEF (*D*)	
	Report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2017 (*I*)	
	Office of Internal Audit and Investigations 2017 annual report to the Executive Board (*D*), and management response	
	UNICEF Audit Advisory Committee 2017 annual report (*I*)	
Resource, financial and budgetary matters	**Resource, financial and budgetary matters**	**Resource, financial and budgetary matters**
UNICEF financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2016 and report of the Board of Auditors (*D*)	Report on cost recovery (*D*)	UNICEF Strategic Plan: updated financial estimates, 2017–2020 (*D*)
Private Fundraising and Partnerships: 2018 workplan and proposed budget (*D*)		Private Fundraising and Partnerships: financial report for the year ended 31 December 2017 (*D*)

First regular session *6-9 February 2018*	*Annual session* *11-14 June 2018*	*Second regular session* *12-14 September 2018*
Other matters	**Other matters**	**Other matters**
Provisional list of agenda items for the annual session of 2018	Address by the Chairperson of the UNICEF Global Staff Association Reports of the field visits of the Executive Board (*I*) Provisional list of agenda items for the second regular session of 2018	Provisional list of agenda items for the first regular session of 2019

Note:
(*D*) — *For decision*. The Secretariat prepares documentation on the agenda item. The Executive Board is expected to discuss and adopt a decision under the agenda item.
(*I*) — *For information*. The secretariat prepares documentation for information. The Executive Board may opt to take a decision under the agenda item.

Second regular session
15 September 2017

2017/16
Private Fundraising and Partnerships: financial report for the year ended 31 December 2016

Private Fundraising and Partnerships budgeted expenses for the 2017 fiscal year (special purpose)

The Executive Board

1. *Appreciates* that the revenue goals from private fundraising and partnerships for the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 will require additional investment to capitalize on growth opportunities;

2. *Recognizes* the importance of private fundraising and partnerships for the implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, including with regard to revenue mobilization for the integrated budget, 2018–2021;

3. *Takes note* of the preparation of the UNICEF Private Fundraising and Partnerships Plan 2018–2021, and requests that it be presented at the first regular session of 2018 and encourages UNICEF to implement lessons learned from the UNICEF Private Partnerships and Fundraising Plan 2014–2017;

4. *Also takes note* that the integrated budget, 2018–2021 allocates $998.2 million for private sector fundraising and urges UNICEF to continue to ensure and demonstrate to the Executive Board value for money and the effectiveness and efficiency of this spending;

5. *Notes* that, in order to meet the 2018–2021 revenue targets, the Executive Director recommends the approval of an additional allocation of $12.2 million for 2017 to make early investments to enhance sustainable revenue for programmes during the period of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021;

6. *Approves* for the fiscal year 2017 (1 January to 31 December) the increase of budgeted special purpose expenses from $161.3 million, approved in decision 2017/2 at the first regular session of the Executive Board in February 2017, to $173.5 million, as detailed in the table below;

(In millions of United States dollars)

Investment fund costs funded by special purpose regular resources ($70 million approved)	80.0
Other private sector fundraising costs funded by special purpose regular resources ($46 million approved)	48.2
Total private sector fundraising and partnerships costs funded by special purpose regular resources	**128.2**
Private sector fundraising and partnerships costs funded by special purpose other resources	**45.3**
Total special purpose expenses	**173.5**

7. *Encourages* UNICEF to support effective partnerships and other forms of engagement with businesses to uphold children's rights and help children to meet their basic needs and expand their opportunities to reach their full potential.

Second regular session
15 September 2017

2017/17
Evaluation reports and management responses

The Executive Board

1. *Recalls* Executive Board decision 2015/10 and welcomes the United Nations Evaluation Group professional peer review of the evaluation function of UNICEF: Final report, including the main findings, recommendations and suggested actions;

2. *Welcomes* recent steps taken by UNICEF to strengthen its evaluation function, but notes with concern that the overall assessment of the peer review rated the UNICEF evaluation function either "short of being satisfactory" or "close to satisfactory" against the three core principles of independence, credibility and utility;

3. *Also welcomes* the commitment of UNICEF to develop a new evaluation policy incorporating actions to strengthen these core principles and, recalling decision 2017/9 in which the Executive Board requested further harmonization between United Nations agencies, to allocate a minimum of 1 per cent of resources to evaluation;

4. *Takes note* of the evaluation of UNICEF's response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa 2014-2015, including the main findings, conclusions and recommendations;

5. *Welcomes* the commitment of UNICEF to implement and report on actions to strengthen key functions and programming approaches to better prepare for and respond to health emergencies, including the secondary consequences and specific effects on children.

Second regular session
15 September 2017

Annex II

Report of the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP 19 June 2017

A. Operationalizing the decisions of the QCPR, specifically taking into consideration climate change and building resilience

1. The President of the Executive Board of UNICEF opened the joint meeting by welcoming the participants of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)/United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the World Food Programme (WFP). He also welcomed the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations. He stressed that since the first joint meeting of the Boards in 1998, the United Nations system had become a synergistic whole, achieving impressive results. The 2016 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR) was a critical opportunity for change and reform and, together with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, provided a solid basis for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, reflecting each organization's comparative advantage. Climate change and youth/adolescents were specific examples of goals that could be achieved only through inter-agency collaboration. Addressing the needs of youth and adolescents, he noted, was one of the most pressing goals and the United Nations system had to come together to invest in their future.

2. In her opening remarks, the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations highlighted the importance of engaging with youth and protecting the environment within the 2030 Agenda and the global political and development context. Youth represented a cross-pillar investment and young people contributed to peace, prosperity and political dialogue and acted as agents of change. Ensuring their health, well-being, protection, education and skills, especially of girls and the most vulnerable, would provide the foundations for achievement of the goals. The 2030 Agenda and the 2016 QCPR review gave the United Nations development system the road map to become fit for purpose. The Executive Boards had a critical role to play in ensuring synergy and providing strategic guidance at the country level. Greater system-wide coherence should focus on strengthening leadership around results, along with a coherent interface between the Office of the Secretary-General and the governing bodies, including a more integrated governance architecture.

3. The UNICEF Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, highlighted that climate change was central to all the goals and an issue that affected those most in need. Development work had to integrate systems able to anticipate climate-related shocks to reduce their impact, which required system-wide action in analysis and data collection; joint planning, approaches and actions; and targeted programming that maximized agency comparative advantages. The Executive Director, UNOPS, underscored that the 2016 QCPR called upon the United Nations system to work together more effectively and efficiently for better delivery of results. Key to the success of all development interventions was resilient infrastructure, efficient procurement and collaborative actions in planning, designing and implementing programmes, which required the multiple competencies of the United Nations system working together through an impartial resident coordinator.

4. The Deputy Executive Secretary, Southern African Development Community, discussed the collective role of the United Nations system in supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and building resilience at the country level against the backdrop of the 2015 drought and impending famine in the southern African region. A coordination unit was created to bring in United Nations system organizations with a humanitarian and recovery mandate, mobilize resources and raise awareness at the national, regional and global levels. Success also derived from high-level United Nations support. The humanitarian and development teams combined planning and budgets and worked closely together — a major factor in ensuring that resilience-building began in the midst of crisis. This resilience approach was successful because it was system-wide, and addressed the issues and underlying conditions that had created the crisis in the first place.

5. The United Nations Resident Coordinator, Maldives, reported on collaborative work of the United Nations country team, including the development of the new United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the implementation of the standard operating procedures within the experience of the Maldives. The country had, in the past 20 years, graduated from least developed country status to middle-income country status. Climate change, however, remained a formidable challenge, which was capable of wiping out hard-won gains. The United Nations was the country's most crucial development partner, but it depended upon many non-resident agencies. Coordination was the key to success, including through a much tighter and focused UNDAF, grounded in human rights and built upon "Delivering as one" and the standard operating procedures. The Resident Coordinator also noted the difficulties in aligning UNDAFs with agency-specific plans, the duplicative reporting they presented and how that took away from time that could be devoted to implementation. Strong national support and incentives guaranteed a strong and united country team. Country teams would benefit from less burdensome planning processes and aligned agency operating systems.

6. The Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the four Executive Boards, the heads and deputy heads of the six United Nations organizations and members of the Executive Boards were actively engaged throughout the session and provided a number of comments on the role of the United Nations development system in addressing climate change, resilience and youth engagement, noting that:

(a) Climate change and youth engagement were ideal areas for system-wide approaches since the answers to addressing both were systemic in nature and required a whole-of-society approach;

(b) Resilience was a core concept that was multidimensional in nature and allowed broader development choices;

(c) The humanitarian-development-peace nexus was the perfect mechanism for the United Nations system to work together to build resilience to climate change;

(d) The system had a key role to play through its convening power and awareness-raising capacity in addressing climate change and youth;

(e) The system had to use its comparative strengths to ensure its collaborative advantages;

(f) Data collection, disaggregation and the capacity for planning and measuring results were key to reaching vulnerable communities and building resilience;

(g) The joint meetings of the Executive Boards needed further strengthening, including a more integrated Executive Boards governing structure;

(b) The common chapters of the organizations' strategic plans should flesh out how system-wide coordination would help to leave no one behind, strengthen partnerships, build resilience, ensure an impartial United Nations resident coordinator, build national capacity, and pursue joint business operations, supported by common results and indicators and a joint resource mobilization strategy.

7. In conclusion, the UNDP Administrator and Chair of the United Nations Development Group stressed that the 2016 QCPR called upon the United Nations development system to work in a new way. The challenge was to overcome the fact that the organizations continued to function as before, with little institutional alignment to incentivize staff to work together. The common and unified 2030 Agenda was clear and compelling. The system had to delve deeper to fix its institutional alignment challenge in order to succeed and meet the 2030 Agenda vision. It should also pursue financing which, as opposed to the programme-centred focus of funding, sought to build the broad capacities of national and local communities to better use and generate resources. Similarly, Member States and donors had to create the conditions that encouraged the United Nations system to work together.

8. The Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the New York Office, United Nations Environment Programme, presented the system-wide strategies adopted by the United Nations Development Group High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) and the collective role of the United Nations development system in supporting resilient development, including regarding climate change. At the policy level, HLCP offered an example of an inter-agency entity acting as one through a coordinated approach ideal for holistically addressing such issues as climate change and a model for country teams at the country level, as articulated in the new UNDAF guidelines. The strategic approach to climate change action adopted by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination was an excellent example that prescribed integrated collaborative action to deliver co-benefits across the entire 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. It aimed to foster collaborative action in eight impact areas in which shared expertise was needed and ensured joint approaches to climate change. The roll-out to regional and country teams would take place in 2017. The High-Level Committee had been active in coordinating system-wide climate action in previous high-level forums as well.

9. In closing, the President of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS thanked the delegations and the six United Nations organizations for their participation in the morning segment of the joint meeting.

B. Working with adolescents and youth to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals

10. The Vice-President of the Executive Board of UN-Women welcomed the members of the four Executive Boards, the representatives of the six United Nations organizations and the guest speakers representing youth to the discussion on working together with adolescents and youth to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

11. In opening remarks, the Deputy Executive Director, Management, UNFPA, highlighted that despite much progress in recent decades for young people, women and girls, growing inequalities were denying many access to benefits. Young and adolescent girls were especially vulnerable since many challenges, such as adolescent marriage and childbearing, continued to persist. Such conditions exacerbated the cycle of poverty and poor health for women and girls. It was why empowering young people, especially women and girls, was key to reducing

intergenerational poverty and seizing the demographic dividend. Development planning had to focus on young people, safeguarding their human rights, removing barriers to participation and investing in their capacities. Further, young people had to be an integral part of the solution, recognized and engaged in the design and implementation of programmes.

12. The representative of the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth, one of the young guest speakers, gave a presentation on young people shaping and implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. Youth groups had played a seminal role in influencing the 2030 Agenda and were engaged in taking direct action on the ground, creating formal spaces to hold Governments accountable, or drafting shadow reports on government policies. They were involved in such areas as sustainable consumption and production, humanitarian response, mapping the effects of disasters, cleaning up the environment and applying indigenous knowledge and practices where modern approaches exacerbated inequalities. The United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth embraced a collective membership approach to inspire knowledge exchange regarding the Goals and to help youth to understand the 2030 Agenda. The representative appealed to Member States and the Executive Boards to continue to engage with youth in implementing the Goals and to elevate youth to permanent observer status in the General Assembly.

13. The Youth Advocate and UNFPA Youth Innovation Fellow, the other young guest speaker, gave a presentation entitled "Youth leadership and engagement in the United Nations — opportunities, challenges and the way forward". Despite its diversity, the current generation shared common characteristics across borders. They were digital natives inhabiting a more democratic space. They were the first generation in the spotlight of international development. Their challenges included vulnerability, inequality, misinformation and exploitation by power groups, violence (especially in conflict settings), and unemployment or employment in precarious conditions. A one-size-fits-all solution was not the answer, however. Data showed that youth participation and leadership in policies and formal decision-making were low across the globe. Youth had starkly different interests in different places and had a trust deficit in established governing structures, including the United Nations. The way forward should focus on: (a) building trust by spotlighting United Nations *values* against those of other power groups seeking to recruit youth; (b) creating the *right spaces* for youth, focused on the political aspirations of modern youth and issue-centred concerns; and (c) fostering *horizontal democratic structures* as opposed to hierarchical structures. The best support to youth was building their skills and resources so that they could make a difference.

14. In turn, the Executive Director, UN-Women, stressed that focusing on youth, women and girls was the best way to ensure that no one was left behind. Youth and women were at the forefront of many modern challenges, but were also resilient and drivers of change. The Secretary-General had made a strong commitment to deliver for and with youth, especially young women, through a coherent and coordinated United Nations development system. Investments in youth and women had a high guaranteed rate of return, and should include empowerment, job creation and skills building, especially in the most disadvantaged communities, and be done through partnerships and at scale. It was estimated that almost 90 per cent of future jobs would require digital literacy, a skill youth already possessed. Inter-agency work was the best approach to supporting youth and had already engendered successful strategies targeted at youth.

15. The Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the four Executive Boards, the heads and deputy heads of the six United Nations organizations and members of the Executive Boards were again actively engaged throughout the session and provided

a number of comments on how the United Nations could work with adolescents and youth in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, noting that:

(a) Youth as agents of change were critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals — they were not simply beneficiaries, because their role extended from advocacy to substantive participation in planning and implementation;

(b) Young people's inclusive and meaningful participation at all levels was critical to addressing their needs and ensuring that they acted as accelerators in achieving the Goals for all in societies;

(c) Youth strategies and programmes had to account for young people's diversity and the complexity of their specific needs;

(d) Partners and country teams should engage young people in formal and informal decision-making at the national and local levels and integrate their priorities in policy processes, including in strategies and road maps for the Goals and through the UNDAF process;

(e) Partners should focus on removing obstacles to and support youth participation in all phases of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including in creating civic space for youth, supporting their roles in localization, collecting data and reporting, and fostering enabling environments for their involvement in implementation, monitoring and accountability;

(f) Partners should build trust in the United Nations and its values, foremost by promoting youth capacities and participation to deliver on the 2030 Agenda and by engaging youth in the spaces in which they gathered (e.g., social media, music and gaming);

(g) Global, regional and national indicators, data collection and analysis should be youth-focused and youth-relevant;

(h) Societies should equip young people with decent jobs and life skills, invest in public education, support young people as social and civic actors, support youth organizations and focus on engaging vulnerable youth, including young women and youth in crisis settings;

(i) Partnering with grass-roots organizations to reach the most marginalized youth and promoting volunteerism were key ways of having youth engage in achieving the Goals and ensuring that no one was left behind;

(j) Youth-focused programmes required adequate funding to have a sustainable impact. The vision of the United Nations youth strategy aimed to ensure that by 2030 young people's rights were protected and promoted, their specific needs addressed and their role as agents of change in conflict prevention, development and peace recognized, valued and promoted.

16. In summarizing the discussion, the Deputy Executive Director, WFP, stressed the importance of synergy within the United Nations development system for youth and youth opportunities, especially at the country level. While creating formal and informal spaces for youth engagement was crucial, financing remained a challenge. The international community needed to internalize its responsibility towards young people when engaging youth as change agents for the 2030 Agenda.

17. In closing remarks, the Vice-President of the Executive Board of WFP welcomed the enthusiasm and readiness of the guest speakers on behalf of youth to engage in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, and encouraged Member States and the United Nations system to give them their full support. He also commended the Board members and the United Nations organizations for their

commitment to working together to support and engage youth on the 2030 Agenda, which was a model to be followed.

18. The President of the Executive Board of UNICEF closed the meeting by thanking the delegations and the six United Nations organizations for their active participation and rich discussion.

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